

State of Mental Health at Work

Report 2025: East Africa

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Introduction

Staff engagement and wellbeing challenges are no longer anecdotal - they are measurable, persistent, and directly shape employees' ability to perform and contribute meaningfully, with clear implications for the bottom line of every business.

“Mental wellness is an internal resource that helps us think, feel, connect, and function; it is an active process that helps us to build resilience, grow, and flourish.” - Beth McGroarty, Global Wellness Institute, 2021

At mHub it is our aim to contribute to employee and organizational wellbeing across Africa through implementing customized comprehensive employee wellbeing programs; monitoring, evaluation, and reporting (MER) on all interventions; and through local and regional research.

As we've reported since 2021, awareness of workplace mental health and wellbeing have continued to grow over the past five years. Yet the stakes are rising in parallel. During 2025, organizations found themselves navigating a deeply human challenge with strategic consequences: how to support employees to continue functioning, adapting, and performing in workplaces shaped by constant uncertainty, rapid AI-driven change, rising cumulative stress, and increasingly limited capacity. Work is now one of the top 3 sources of stress for adults. And with the rapid rise of AI, a new layer of uncertainty and pressure is entering the workplace. (2025 survey conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of the American Psychological Association).

Gallup's 2025 State of the Global Workplace regional data paint a stark picture of the lived experience of employees in Sub-Saharan Africa. Only 19% of employees are engaged at work, compared to a global average of 21%. Gallup's analysis further reveals that managers experienced the sharpest decline in engagement, identifying manager morale and capability as a primary driver of the broader engagement and wellbeing downturn.

Crucially, Gallup's global analyses demonstrate that engagement alone is no longer a sufficient proxy for wellbeing. In many regions, stress levels remain high even where engagement has stabilized or improved. High stress and burnout remain widespread, engagement and wellbeing continue to reinforce one another, and external macro-economic pressures - including financial stress, skills uncertainty, and labour market volatility - further compound employee distress, particularly in African contexts.

Hence, it is no surprise then that workforce instability is rising. According to the Gallup global research, 72% of employees are looking for or actively seeking new job opportunities, signaling dissatisfaction and fragility in organizational attachment.

Workplace conversations largely center on performance, productivity, and transformation. But behind the dashboards and KPIs, there are employees who feel isolated, overwhelmed, and emotionally unsupported. Compounding this challenge is a growing perception gap around employer care. Work stress is peaking, and the gap between what people need and what they receive is widening. Despite increased organizational attention to wellbeing, *Gallup* consistently reports that only a small proportion of employees strongly agree that their employer genuinely cares about their overall wellbeing. This erosion of trust undermines the effectiveness of wellbeing investments and weakens employee engagement with available support.

Employees increasingly assess wellbeing not through policies or programs, but through their daily lived experience of work. Recent academic evidence reinforces this shift, demonstrating that improved work-life balance, flexible work design, and supportive psychosocial environments are strongly correlated with higher motivation, lower burnout, and greater job satisfaction.

In this context, authentic, system-level approaches to wellbeing are no longer optional - they are essential to organizational resilience and performance. (*BMC Psychology, May 2025, published by Springer Nature link*). Many corporate wellbeing initiatives - particularly one-off workshops or standalone apps - show little measurable impact on employee wellbeing, stress, or job satisfaction when they lack depth, relevance, and organizational alignment. Even well-intentioned programs fail when uptake is low due to poor awareness, stigma, weak leadership sponsorship, or misalignment with real employee needs.

Furthermore, employees have become more discerning, and expectations of leadership have increased significantly. Research shows a growing emphasis on emotional intelligence in management - including empathy, boundary-setting, wellbeing support, and burnout prevention. (*BMC Psychology, November 2024, published by Springer Nature link*). We are in a new era of leadership defined by empathy, connection and humanity. This is the inevitable leadership evolution of our time. As organizations prepare for what lies ahead, many are realizing that sustainable performance depends less on hierarchy and more on human understanding.

Productivity, culture and retention are no longer driven by structure, but by empathy. This is not a subtle shift, but rather a seismic one.

Looking at the East Africa region, mHub, for our 2025 report, surveyed 217 professional staff across East Africa to collect current data to better understand staff experiences, needs, and challenges related to workplace mental health and wellbeing. We also compare results with the findings of our previous 2023 survey.

State of Mental Health at Work 2023:

Top 4 Insights

1. Stress levels on the rise

In 2023, more than 80% of East African employees indicated experiencing moderate, high, or extreme levels of stress. This finding was particularly alarming, given that 37.8% of the respondents qualified their stress levels as high or extreme.

The highest levels of stress were experienced by junior professionals (86.3%), even more so than what executives experienced (82.4%).

Females (42.7%) reported much higher levels of extreme and high stress compared to men (30.9%).

2023 Stress levels of East African workers:

42.7%	moderate
37.8%	high/extreme stress

2. The impact of stress on productivity

As many as 51.6% of respondents believed that their current stress negatively impacted their ability to *concentrate and keep focus*; and 48.3% of them believed it resulted in them being *less productive*.

The job level category of middle management recorded the highest figures for concentration, focus, and reduced productivity – an alarming 61.9% of them!

Presenteeism over the past 6 months:

48.3%	less productive
51.6%	difficulty concentrating

3. Employers are expected to do more to support employee mental health and wellbeing (2023)

In 2023, more than 50% of mHub survey respondents said they receive some form of support services from their employers.

What was noteworthy was, and still is, that “some form of support” does not necessarily mean effective and sustainable support.

In fact, a staggering 82.5% of respondents said they wished their employers did more to support employee emotional and mental health.

East African employees call upon their employers to do more:

82.5% wish their employer did more

84.6% consider employer support as important when evaluating new job offers

4. Working professionals shared signs of imminent burnout (2023)

Fatigue, tiredness, and lack of energy were by far the biggest challenges of all (67.8% of respondents).

This significant finding should not be taken lightly. One in five employees globally struggle to manage stress levels at work – a leading cause of burnout. A key dimension of burnout is feelings of detachment from the job. This sheds further light on the large number of respondents who say they *lack motivation* (53.8%).

East African employees exhibit burnout symptoms:

53.8% lack motivation

67.8% struggle with fatigue, tiredness, and lack of energy

State of Mental Health at Work 2025: Top 6 Insights

1. Stress levels remain high and are increasing for managers

In 2025, more than 82.5% of East African working adults indicated experiencing moderate, high, or extreme levels of stress, with 35.5% of the respondents qualifying their stress levels as high or extreme.

These figures should not be taken lightly - elevated stress has direct and measurable consequences for cognitive functioning, decision-making, interpersonal dynamics, productivity, and performance.

We know that, in many East African and global workplaces, stress and exhaustion are normalized as part of professional life. This cultural normalization may cause individuals to underreport or dismiss the influence of work on their wellbeing ("it's just how work is").

What was particularly alarming was the very high levels of stress levels experienced by middle managers (43%), executives and senior managers (42%) reporting high or extreme stress over the months May - October 2025.

In the 2025 survey the age group 35-44 years was the most pressured cohort. This group showed cumulative financial, workload, and leadership stress.

Like in 2023, women (43% in 2023 and in 2025) reported experiencing much higher levels of extreme or high stress compared to men (31% in 2023 and 28% in 2025).

Also, as in 2023, personal finances are the single most consistent stressor across gender, job level, and age, with 42% of respondents in 2025 citing this causes them stress while they are at work. Next were heavy workloads and long hours at 36%, and poor management/ leadership at 29%.

Significantly, employees with access to wellbeing services were substantially less likely to report high or extreme stress than those without such access. Among respondents whose employers offered wellbeing services, 28.3% reported high or extreme stress, compared with 44.3% of those working in organizations without these services.

2025 Stress levels of East African workers:

47.0% moderate stress

35.5% high/extreme stress

2. Staff feel their job negatively impacts their mental health and wellbeing

In September 2022, the WHO released a [report](#) that linked the mental health of individual employees to the workplace and affirmed that promoting mental health is the collective responsibility of every organization.

In 2025, mHub asked survey respondents: *“Do you feel that your job might be affecting your mental health and wellbeing negatively?”*

A significant proportion, about one in three employees (35%) explicitly feel that their job is negatively affecting their mental health and wellbeing. This suggests a substantial level of occupational stress, burnout, or emotional strain within the workforce.

The 24% who are “Not sure” likely experience mixed or inconsistent effects. This ambivalence signals uncertainty or partial distress, hence this group represents a potential risk zone: if stressors persist or intensify, they could transition into the “Yes” category over time.

The fact that nearly 60% are either unsure or feel negatively impacted underscores that workplace mental wellbeing is a widespread concern in this sample. Even among employees who believe they are unaffected, work inevitably shapes mental wellbeing - positively or negatively.

It is noteworthy that from this survey, we see that the impact is not evenly distributed. This underscores the importance of targeted, data-informed employee wellbeing strategies, rather than one-size-fits-all interventions. Age, work environment, and industry context meaningfully influence risk levels.

Our research also shows that perceived negative mental health increases with age, peaking in the 55+ cohort (50%), and is notably higher among employees aged 35-44 (40.2%). Reported impact is relatively similar between men (33.6%) and women (36.4%), with slightly higher reporting among women.

Across different industries, we see that staff working in the NGO/ non-profit sector (37.8%) feel this the most, followed by healthcare professionals (36.4%), Telecommunication staff (33.3%), Banking & finance people (31.8%), and Government/ public sector staff (31.6%).

Negative impact of job on mental health and wellbeing:

35% yes

24% not sure

41% no

3. Retention risks are extremely high (2025)

To the survey question *“Have you considered leaving your job in the past 6 months?”* 45% of survey respondents acknowledged that they’ve thought about leaving their jobs in the period March – August 2025, while 10% were unsure.

This effectively leaves 55% of the workforce at potential risk of turnover, meaning talent retention risk is very high. When nearly half of employees are contemplating exit, organizations face a major retention challenge. This is an urgent wake-up call to re-engage, re-energize, and reconnect people to purpose.

Although thinking about leaving doesn’t always mean an employee is sending out résumés - it does suggest emotional disengagement. This group might be less motivated, more stressed, and less likely to go above and beyond.

For middle managers, the figure is even higher - 47.5% (compared to 42% of executives/ senior managers) of them said they thought about leaving!

Looking into the factors leading to people considering leaving their jobs, the three top drivers were low pay and benefits (32%), lack of growth opportunities (30%), and poor leadership or supervision (25%). This shows that compensation remains the baseline factor - but it’s not the only one. Pay dissatisfaction often amplifies when other needs (growth, recognition, leadership quality) are unmet.

The 30% of survey respondents citing lack of growth opportunities is a critical finding. It signals that people are not just leaving for money, but for progress, learning, and purpose.

Additionally, the 25% reporting poor leadership and supervision as a retention tipping point underlines the need for manager training in inclusive leadership, empathy, and constructive feedback. When employees feel micromanaged, unsupported, or unseen, they disengage.

Beyond structural and managerial factors, several wellbeing-related issues emerged as significant push factors. Nearly one in four respondents identified stress and burnout (22%), and 21% cited feeling undervalued or unappreciated, underscoring the emotional and psychological dimensions of employee retention.

Additionally, poor work-life balance (20%) was reported as a key concern, reflecting growing demands for flexibility, workload management, and organizational support for mental health.

2025 staff thinking about leaving their jobs:

45.16%	yes
9.68%	not sure
45.16%	no

4. High levels of disengagement at work (2025)

Do you feel engaged and motivated in your current job role?

This is an important question as it gets to the heart of organizational psychology and performance.

For our 2025 survey, 29.49% of staff reported being generally engaged & motivated and 31.34% highly engaged & motivated most of the time. A workforce with 61% engaged staff is likely to perform adequately, but below optimal potential. The fact that only about one-third are “*highly engaged most of the time*” suggests that while employees may show up and perform their duties, many might not feel fully inspired, empowered, or emotionally connected to their work.

This points to a functional rather than thriving workforce - people are doing what’s required but not necessarily performing at their creative or innovative best. Employees may stay committed even under strain, but without intentional investment in wellbeing, this resilience can erode over time.

Of the 39% who reported being only sometimes, rarely or never engaged, 27% said they were only “*sometimes*” engaged. Moderate engagement = moderate productivity.

Research consistently shows a strong correlation between engagement and productivity:

Engaged employees are more creative, proactive, and resilient under stress.

Compared to men (11.21%) disengagement (rarely/ seldom or not at all engagement) among for women (12.12%) are similar; while for young professionals (18-28 years) disengagement is the highest of all age groups – 20% said they feel rarely/ seldom or not at all engaged. This represents a significant performance and morale risk, suggesting a need for stronger role clarity, growth pathways, and leadership support.

The 29-34 age cohort, on the other hand, is the most engaged group with nearly 73% reporting regular or consistent motivation. Of the mid-career respondents (35–44-year-olds) a sizeable one-third fluctuate between motivation and disengagement with 33% saying they are only “*sometimes*” engaged. This indicates potential pressure from stress and cumulative work and life demands.

2025 staff engagement and motivation:

39.17%	never, rarely, sometimes
29.49%	regularly
31.34%	most of the time

5. Employers are expected to do more to support employee mental health and wellbeing (2025)

Across all age groups, employee wellbeing services are not a “nice-to-have”, rather a decisive factor in employer attractiveness. 74.19% of respondents said they wish their employer did more to support employee mental health and wellbeing; 82.49% consider employer support as important when evaluating new job offers. In fact, 60.37% find it “extremely important”.

From this sample, the desire peaked among mid-career professionals (35–44-year cohort) of whom 72.2% rated wellbeing services as “extremely important”!

We found 46% of respondents reported that their employers offer wellbeing services, while 45% indicated that they do not. Notably, a further 10% said they were unsure whether such services are available.

When asked about access, 53% of respondents reported having reasons for not using the wellbeing services that are available to them. Of particular concern, 27.52% of this group cited a lack of awareness of what services exist and how to access them as the primary barrier. This reveals a critical – and avoidable – gap in how employee wellbeing support is communicated and championed within organizations.

Despite investments in wellbeing services, limited awareness and weak visibility point to insufficient leadership ownership and advocacy. Without strong leadership buy-in and clear, consistent communication, wellbeing initiatives risk remaining underutilized, undermining both their impact and return on investment.

Wellbeing efforts are effective only to the extent that they are embedded into everyday leadership behaviours, job structures, and organizational culture. Their impact increases when they are visible, trusted, and embedded into organizational culture.

Additionally, employees are increasingly skeptical of surface-level wellbeing initiatives, rejecting resilience rhetoric that is not matched by structural change. The differentiator today is not intent, but integration.

East African staff call upon their employers to do more:

- 27.52%** lack of awareness of what is available, despite existing services
- 74.19%** wish their employer did more
- 82.49%** consider employer support as important when evaluating new job offers

6. Working professionals shared signs of burnout (2025)

The WHO defines burnout as an occupational phenomenon resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed, characterized by three core dimensions:

- Feelings of energy depletion or **exhaustion** - feeling emotionally exhausted, chronic fatigue
- Increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism - disconnection and **detachment**, cynicism, or loneliness
- Reduced** professional efficacy and **productivity, and lack of motivation**

Like in 2023, we asked East African staff what challenges they experienced at work during the past 30 days. Again, *fatigue, tiredness, and lack of energy* were by far the biggest challenges of all (63.1% of respondents) – a key dimension of burnout. This is more prevalent among women (66.7%) than men (59.5%), while lack of motivation is high across both men (41.4%) and women (44.4%).

The highest fatigue is prevalent in the mid- and late-career respondents: 45–54 years: 72%; 35–44: 66%; and 29–34: 60%. Burnout among managers is creating a critical capability gap, reinforcing a feedback loop in which struggling leaders unintentionally transmit stress to their teams. This has severe implications for East African employers who would do well to empower their staff to better manage their stress.

Although fatigue is lower for younger workers 18–28 years (51%), their *lack of motivation* (49%) is highest of all age groups. In fact, the other key dimension of burnout namely feelings of detachment from the job, is evidenced by the substantial proportion of all respondents reporting low motivation (42.86%). A further 22.58% indicated feelings of disconnection or detachment from their work and/or colleagues. Notably, an additional 16.1% of respondents indicated that they felt *unable to continue or sustain work much longer*, signaling advanced disengagement and exhaustion-related withdrawal.

When it comes to productivity, 35% of respondents said that stress causes them to be less productive at work.

Almost one third of young professionals aged 18–28 report experiencing persistent negative thoughts and maladaptive thinking patterns (31%), with a similarly high prevalence observed among individuals aged 35–44 (28%).

East African staff's burnout symptom profile from this sample:

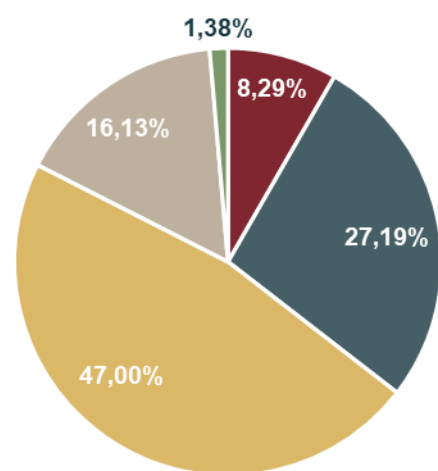
- 63%** struggle with fatigue, tiredness, and lack of energy
- 43%** lack motivation
- 39%** feel detached, disengaged, and/or disconnected
- 35%** say they are less productive

Key 2025 Dimensions

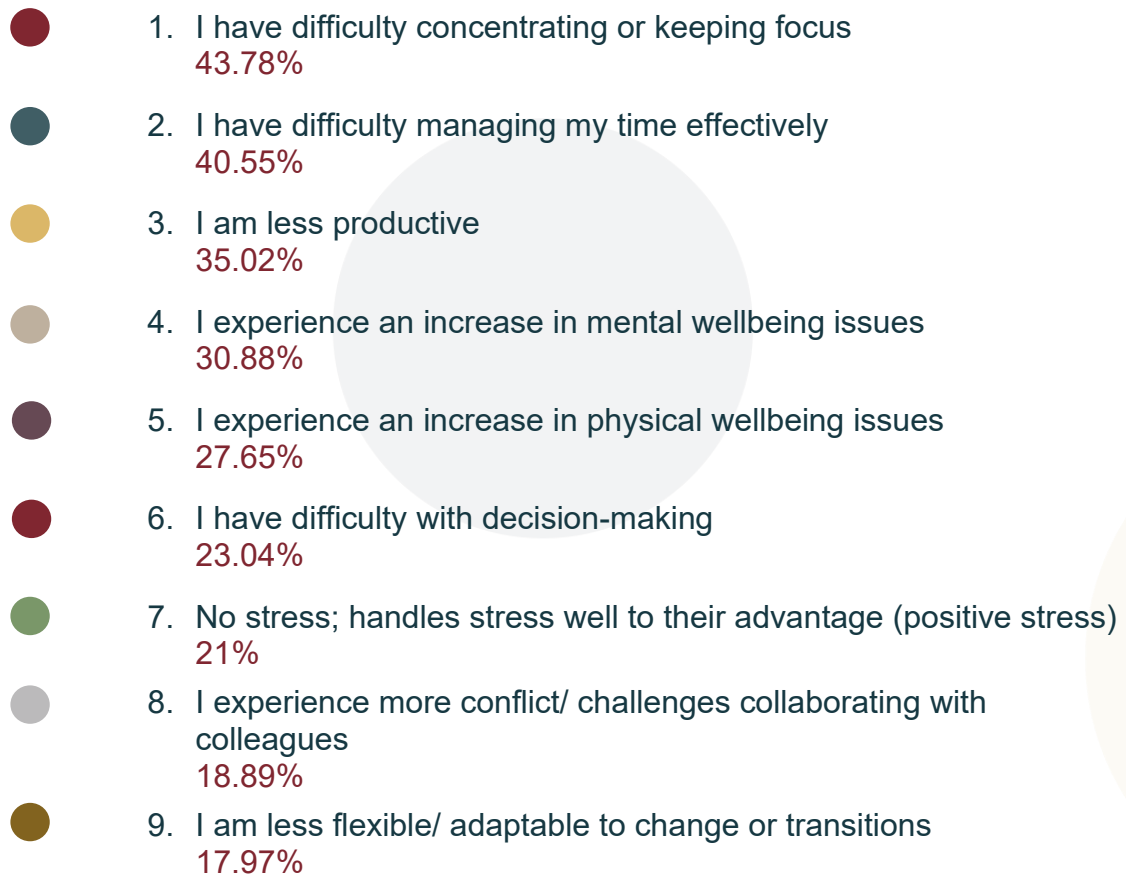
1. Stress

1.1. How would you characterize the overall level of stress you have experienced within the past 6 months?

- Extreme (constant)
8.29%
- High (most days)
27.19%
- Moderate (few days per week)
47.00%
- Low (rarely)
16.13%
- No stress
1.38%

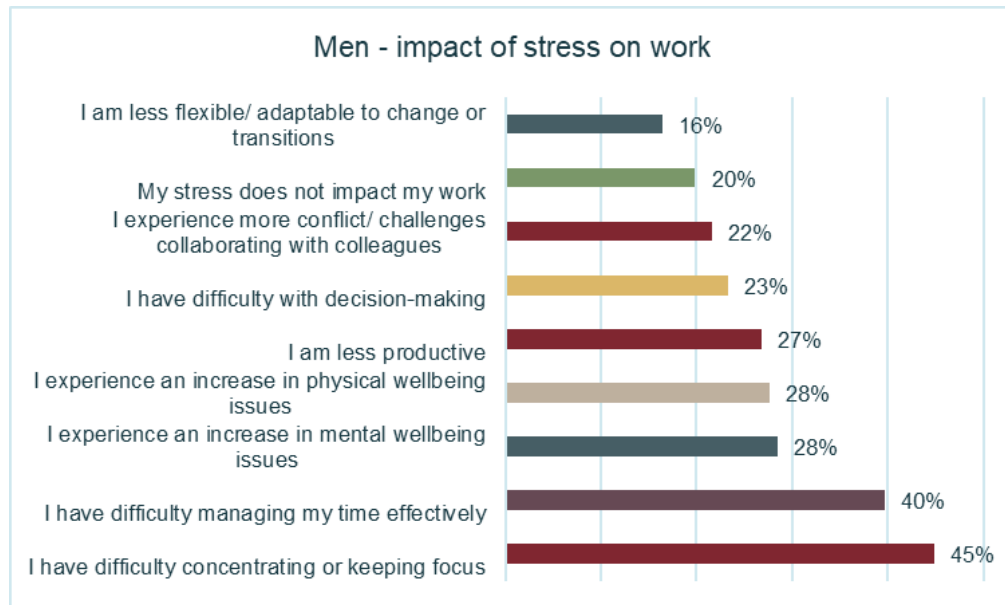


1.2. How does stress impact your work life? Multiple answers are possible.



These figures highlight the consequences of employee stress on productivity. People are at work, but at reduced levels of productivity and performance.

1.2.1. The impact of stress across genders:



1.2.2. The impact of stress on work life across job levels:

The impact of stress varies meaningfully by age group, with a clear escalation in both cognitive and wellbeing-related effects through mid-career stages. The job level category of middle management recorded the highest figures for concentration and focus challenges - a staggering 58% of them - combined with 35% feeling less productive.

For executives/ senior managers from this sample, 47% reported concentration and focus challenges and 45% said stress caused them to be less productive!

1.2.3. The impact of stress on work life by age group:

Young professionals (18-28 years) show pronounced effects across most of the stress impact indicators, particularly when it comes to maintaining focus, being productive, and maintaining resilience to change and transitions. Notably, this group reports rising mental and physical wellbeing concerns.

The early-mid career cohort (29-34 years) experiences high levels of cognitive overload (focus, time management, decision-making) alongside a decline in productivity. At the same time, a higher proportion of this group reported that stress does not impact their work suggesting some are coping effectively – this is highly encouraging!

The 35-44 years age group exhibits the highest overall stress burden across nearly all domains: decision-making, focus and concentration, time management, significant productivity loss, the highest levels of mental and physical wellbeing deterioration, elevated conflict and collaboration challenges, and marked reduced adaptability to change.

Compared with the results in 2023, the number of respondents experiencing and increase in mental health issues as a result of stress significantly increased (30.88% in 2025 compared with 17.5% in 2023). It is important to note that when we refer to an increase in “mental health issues,” we are not referring to diagnosed mental illnesses or clinical disorders. Rather, this finding reflects a decline in employees’ mental fitness and psychological resilience - their capacity to manage stress, maintain focus, regulate emotions, adapt to change, and sustain performance under pressure.

Mental fitness is a core business capability. Employees who are mentally fit are better able to concentrate, solve problems, collaborate effectively, make sound decisions, and recover quickly from setbacks. Conversely, when mental fitness is compromised, even in the absence of clinical illness, organizations experience tangible operational consequences: reduced productivity, lower quality output, increased errors, slower decision-making, disengagement, higher absenteeism, and elevated turnover risk.

From a business perspective, declining mental resilience represents a hidden cost to organizations. It directly affects how employees show up at work each day - how they think, interact, innovate, and perform. Over time, sustained erosion of mental fitness weakens team effectiveness, leadership capacity, and organizational agility, particularly in high-pressure and rapidly changing work environments.

For HR directors, People & Culture leaders, and employers, this shift signals a critical need to move beyond crisis-oriented mental health support and toward proactive investment in mental fitness and resilience. Organizations that strengthen employees’ mental fitness are better positioned to protect performance, sustain engagement, and safeguard their talent pipeline - ultimately delivering stronger, more resilient business outcomes.

1.3. What are the top issues currently impacting your stress levels at work? Multiple answers are possible.

- 
1. Personal finances
41.47%
 2. Heavy workload and long hours
36.41%
 3. Poor management/ leadership
29.03%
 4. Fear of losing job
25.81%
 5. Personal family responsibilities
24.42%
 6. Unclear expectations of my work
19.82%
 7. Negative workplace relationships or conflicts
19.35%
 8. Changes in duties/responsibilities or changes in organization
16.59%
 9. Lack of flexible working hours
15.21%
 10. Lack of autonomy/ decision-making regarding job role
13.82%

The findings reveal that **personal finances are the leading cause of stress among working adults in East Africa - ranking above workload, leadership, or job insecurity**. This emphasizes that financial wellbeing is not a peripheral issue, but a core component of holistic employee wellbeing.

Financial stress affects much more than an employee's wallet. It influences mental health, focus, sleep quality, family relationships, and even physical health outcomes. When employees are preoccupied with financial worries - such as meeting daily expenses, paying school fees, or coping with unexpected costs - they are less able to fully engage and perform at work. Over time, this chronic stress can contribute to burnout, absenteeism, and decreased morale.

For employers, this insight calls for a shift from viewing pay as the only financial lever to adopting a comprehensive financial wellbeing approach. Supporting staff in managing their personal finances is both a compassionate and strategic investment in workforce resilience.

With 29% of respondents citing poor management or leadership as a key stressor, the importance of strengthening managerial capacity in communication, empathy, and people management is crystal clear. The prominence of leadership-related concerns also reinforces the critical role of managerial effectiveness in shaping workplace culture and employee experience. Similarly, fear of job loss (26%) and unclear work expectations (20%) reflect a lack of psychological safety and transparency within organizations.

Personal and family responsibilities (24%) remain a considerable factor for both men (57%) and women (43%), indicating that many employees are juggling competing demands between work and home.

Across different age groups, the following main factors causing stress emerged:

18 - 28 years

- *Personal finances*
- *Heavy workload and long hours*
- *Poor management or leadership*

This cohort exhibits a transition phase marked by workload pressure and highlights the critical importance of supportive leadership to ensure staff engagement and motivation.

29 - 34 years

- *Personal finances*
- *Heavy workload and long hours*
- *Family responsibilities*

Work-life strain becomes prominent in this life stage.

35 - 44 years

- *Personal finances*
- *Heavy workload and long hours*
- *Poor management or leadership*

This is the most pressured age cohort, showing cumulative financial, workload, and leadership stress.

45 - 54

- *Heavy workload and long hours*
- *Poor management or leadership*
- *Personal finances*

Work intensity outweighs financial stress slightly at this stage.

55+

- *Personal finances*
- *Unclear expectations of work*
- *Fear of losing job*

Later-career insecurity and role ambiguity resurface.

Across different job roles, the following main factors causing stress emerged:

Female middle managers

The main stressors reported by female middle managers were:

1. *Changes in duties, responsibilities, or organizational change*
2. *Personal finances*
3. *Lack of autonomy or decision-making power*

Stress in this group is strongly linked to role instability and control, suggesting that change management and empowerment are critical wellbeing levers for female middle managers.

Male middle managers

The dominant stressors reported by male middle managers were:

1. *Personal finances*
2. *Heavy workload and long working hours*
3. *Negative workplace relationships or conflict*

This group appears squeezed between financial pressure and operational demands, with relational strain adding an interpersonal layer of stress.

Female senior managers

The most frequently reported stressors were:

1. *Personal finances*
2. *Poor management or leadership practices*
3. *Heavy workload and long working hours*

This points to systemic issues: senior women are carrying high workloads while also being affected by leadership quality.

Male senior managers

The top stress factors for male senior managers were:

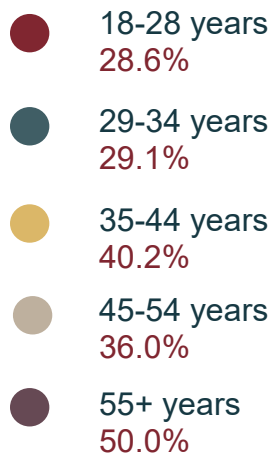
1. *Personal finances*
2. *Heavy workload and long working hours*
3. *Fear of losing their job*

Even at senior levels, financial strain remains highly salient. Job insecurity emerging this strongly suggests organizational or economic uncertainty affecting leadership tiers.

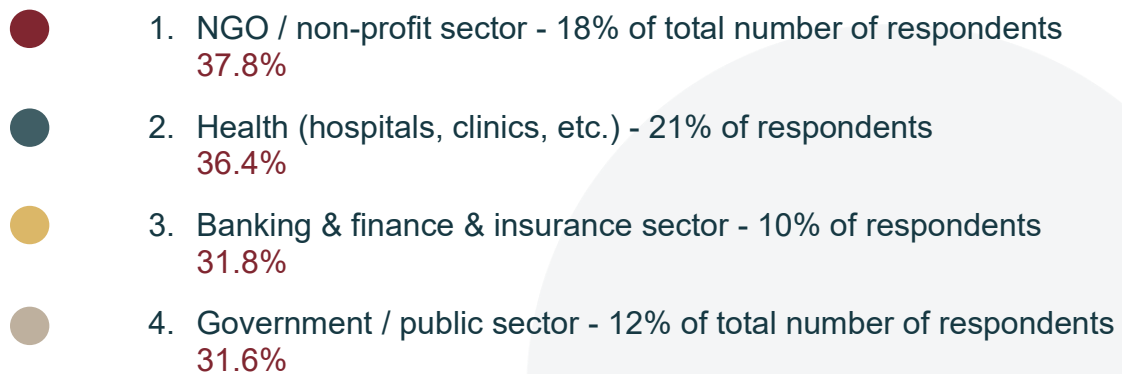
2. Job negatively impacts mental health and wellbeing

Work can inspire, empower, and give purpose. But for too many employees, it has also become a source of anxiety, disconnection, and mental strain.

Percentage within each age cohort reporting a negative mental health impact from their job:



Percentage within industries, represented by at least 10% of respondents in this survey, reporting a negative mental health impact:



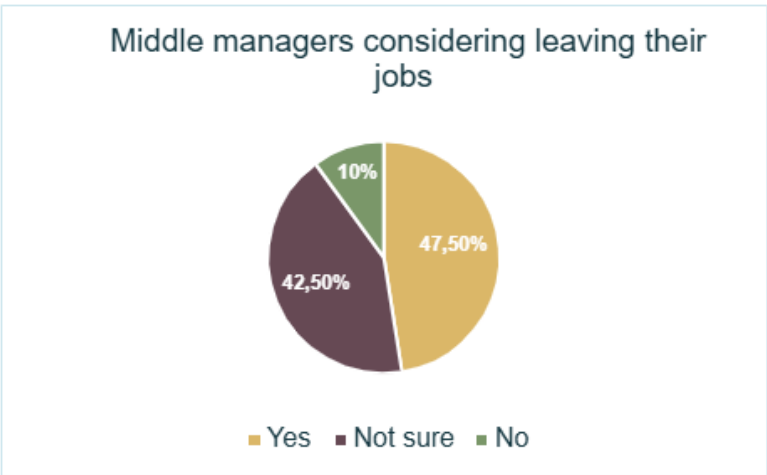
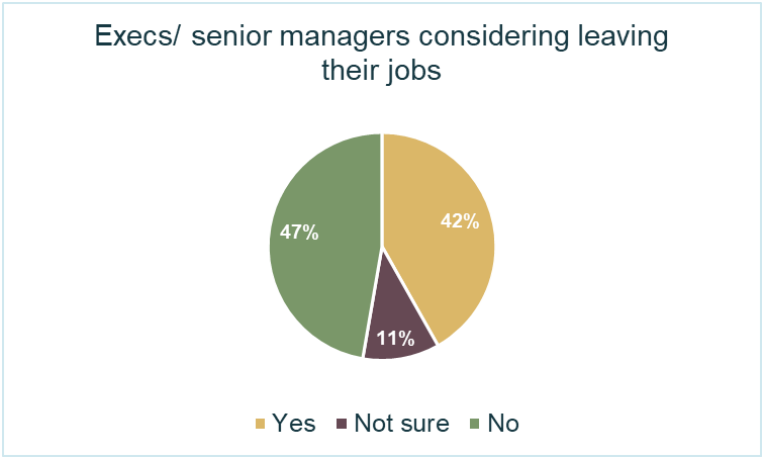
3. Burnout signs

Over the last 30 days, have you experienced any of the following? Multiple responses are possible.

- 1. **Fatigue, tiredness, lack of energy**
62.67%
- 2. **Lack of motivation**
42.40%
- 3. **Difficulty sleeping/ insomnia**
30.41%
- 4. **Negative thoughts/ thinking patterns**
23.50%
- 5. **Self-doubt, lack of self-confidence**
23.04%
- 6. **Feeling disconnected/ detached**
22.58%
- 7. **Nervous, anxious, agitated feelings**
22.58%
- 8. **Bad interactions/ relationships**
18.43%
- 9. **Feeling unable to continue/ sustain work much longer**
17.05%
- 10. **Regular sadness or hopelessness**
13.82%
- 11. **Lack of resilience (capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties/ setbacks)**
11.06%

3. Retention risks

3.1. Have you considered leaving your job in the past 6 months?



3.2. If you have considered leaving your job in the past six months (March – August 2025), what factors influenced that thought? Multiple answers are possible.

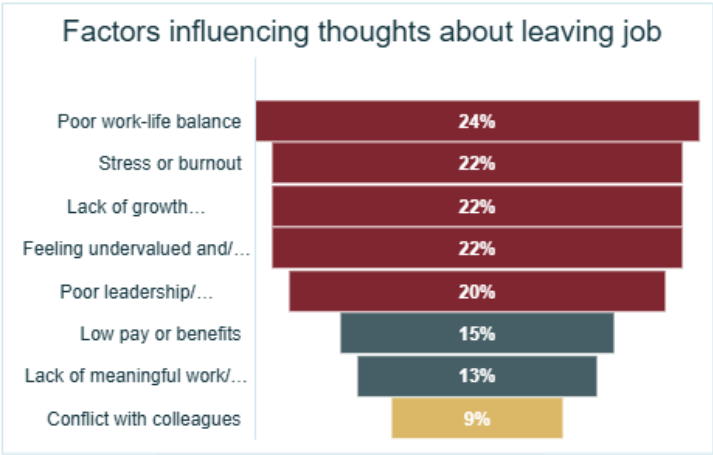
- 
- 1. Low pay or benefits
32%
 - 2. Lack of growth opportunities
30%
 - 3. Poor leadership/ management/ supervision
25%
 - 4. Stress or burnout
22%
 - 5. Feeling undervalued/ unappreciated
21%
 - 6. Poor work-life balance
20%
 - 7. Conflict with colleagues
7%
 - 8. Non-work-related matters
7%

The findings provide valuable insight into the current state of employee sentiment and the key factors influencing turnover intentions among working adults. While 35% of respondents indicated that they are not currently considering leaving their jobs, the remaining 65% expressed either an intention or uncertainty about leaving, signaling notable challenges around engagement and retention.

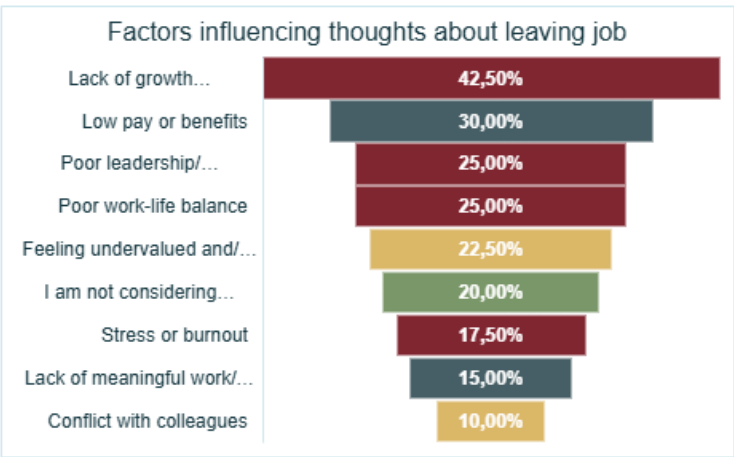
Stress, burnout, feeling undervalued and poor work-life balance reflect emotional fatigue and psychological detachment – often the precursors to turnover. These are tied to workload, recognition, workplace culture, flexibility, and mental health supports – key dimensions of organizational wellbeing which have become essential retention levers, not “nice-to-haves”.

Retention isn't only an HR function anymore - it's a leadership responsibility tied to culture, trust, and meaningful work. Organizations that invest in leadership development, meaningful recognition, and wellbeing-centered policies are more likely to reduce turnover intentions and foster a resilient, engaged workforce.

Below are the factors recorded for **Executives/ senior managers**, with poor work-life balance (23.64%) being the most pressing concern for this group:



For **Middle managers**, lack of growth opportunities (42.50%) is the critical retention issue:



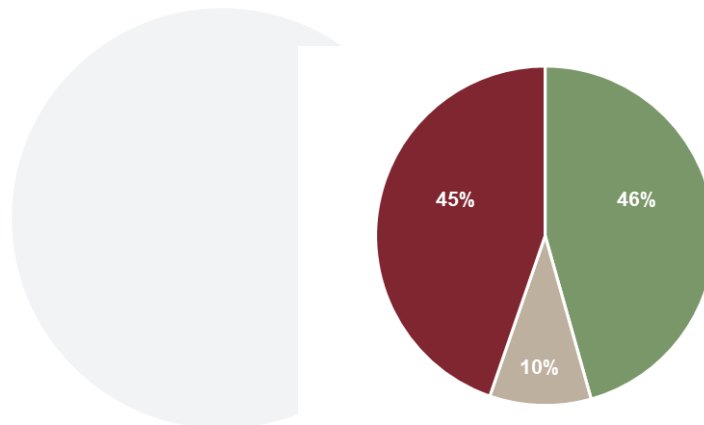
4. Employer and Employee Engagement in Mental Health and Wellbeing

4.1. Does your employer offer any mental health support services?

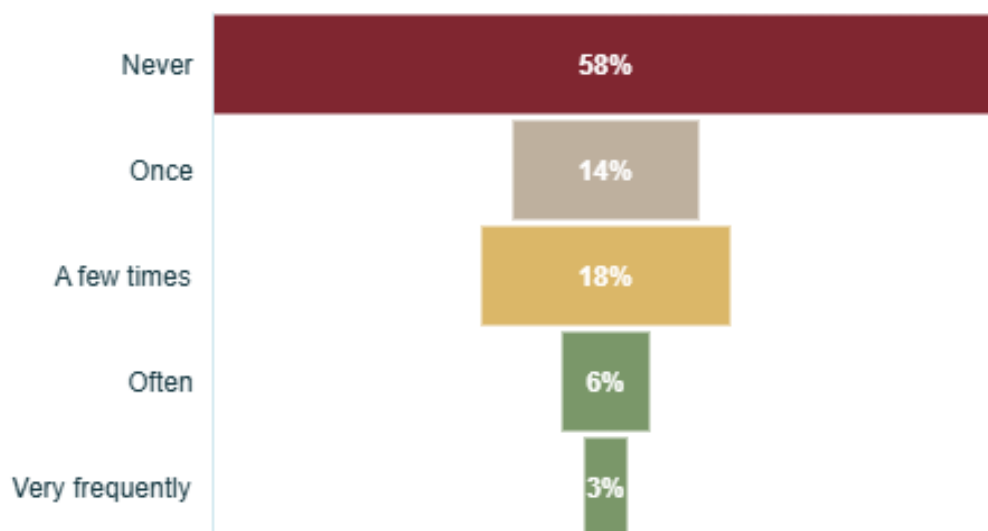
No
45%

I don't know
10%

Yes
46%

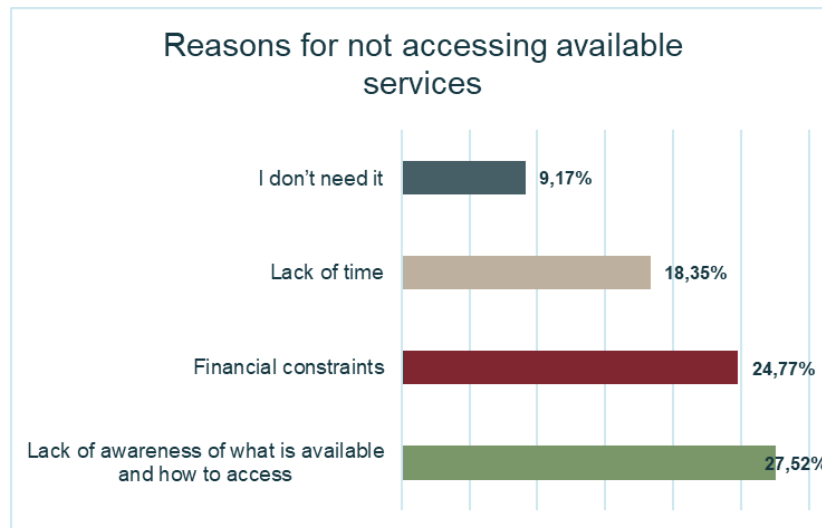


4.2. How often have you used any mental health services in the past 12 months? (like individual counseling/ therapy; employee wellbeing trainings at work; online mental health screenings, etc)



4.3. What is preventing you from accessing available employee mental health and wellbeing services?

This question was posed to the respondents who said their employers do offer staff wellbeing services.



Despite the availability of employee mental health and wellbeing services, a significant proportion of staff are not accessing this support. The primary barrier identified is lack of awareness: 27.52% of respondents report not knowing what services are available or how to access them, highlighting a critical gap in communication and awareness within organizations.

Financial constraints emerge as the second most significant barrier (24.8%), suggesting that perceived or actual costs continue to deter employees - even where services are offered. Time pressure also plays a meaningful role, with 18.4% citing lack of time as a reason for non-use, reflecting the impact of heavy workloads and competing priorities on help-seeking behavior.

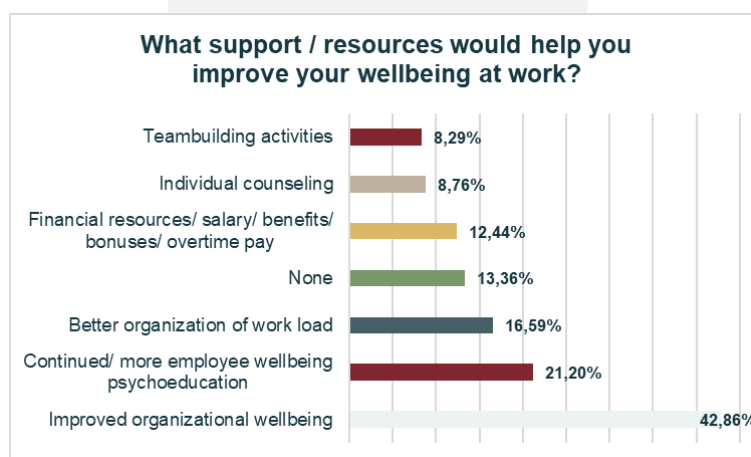
Notably, only 9.2% of respondents indicate that they do not need wellbeing support, reinforcing the conclusion that low utilization is not driven by lack of demand, but rather by structural, communication, and accessibility challenges.

These findings indicate that the presence of wellbeing services alone is insufficient. To drive meaningful uptake and impact, organizations must strengthen awareness, simplify access pathways, reduce real or perceived cost barriers, and normalize help-seeking within the flow of work. Without addressing these factors, wellbeing investments risk remaining underutilized and delivering limited return - despite clear employee need.

5. Most desired wellbeing services

We were happy to note that respondents were eager to share their ideas around what is needed to better support them. This is a highly encouraging situation that tells People & Culture and HR leaders that their investments in employee wellbeing will fall on increasingly fertile ground and that staff are eager to embrace focused activities.

5.1. What support, resources, or changes would help you improve your wellbeing at work? Multiple responses possible.



This question elicited qualitative data, and many respondents shared their own thoughts as opposed to simply ticking off from a drop-down list. To calculate the percentages in the chart above, we grouped the desired support/ resources as follows -

5.1.1. Improved organizational wellbeing (42.86% of respondents) includes the following key themes and responses:

a. Organizational commitment and policy support

- ✓ Employer support for comprehensive wellbeing services
- ✓ Improved workplace wellbeing and HR policies
- ✓ Annual leave and mental health sick days
- ✓ Support for staff with disabilities

b. Workplace culture and psychological safety

- ✓ Mental wellness awareness at work
- ✓ A conducive and positive work environment
- ✓ Treating staff equally, including freedom from stigma
- ✓ Recognition, respect, and feeling valued
- ✓ Recognition of roles and responsibilities

c. Leadership and management practices

- ✓ Good leadership and effective communication
- ✓ Leadership training
- ✓ Improved supervision
- ✓ Regular check-ins with staff

d. Communication and collaboration

- ✓ Improved employee-management collaboration
- ✓ Improved communication across teams and levels

e. Career development

- ✓ Growth and career development opportunities
- ✓ Promotion based on merit

f. Workforce stability and retention

- ✓ Improved staff retention

5.1.2. Continued psychoeducation (21.2% of respondents) includes the following desired topics:

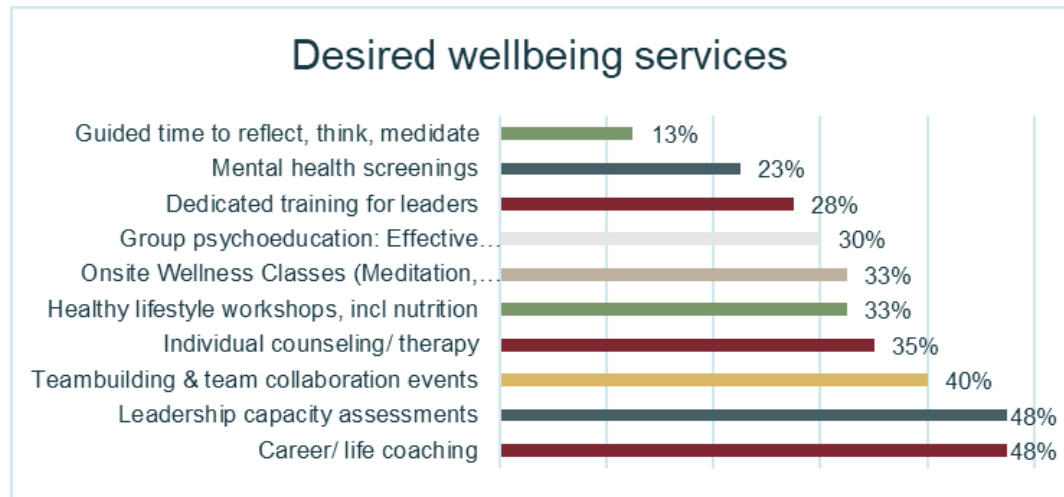
- Regular Mental Health Awareness campaigns
- Emotional Intelligence
- Personal Financial Wellbeing
- Self-care Practices and Principles
- Stress Management
- Preventing Burnout
- Healthy Work-life Balance

5.1.3. Better organization of workload (16.59% of respondents) includes the following pain points for staff:

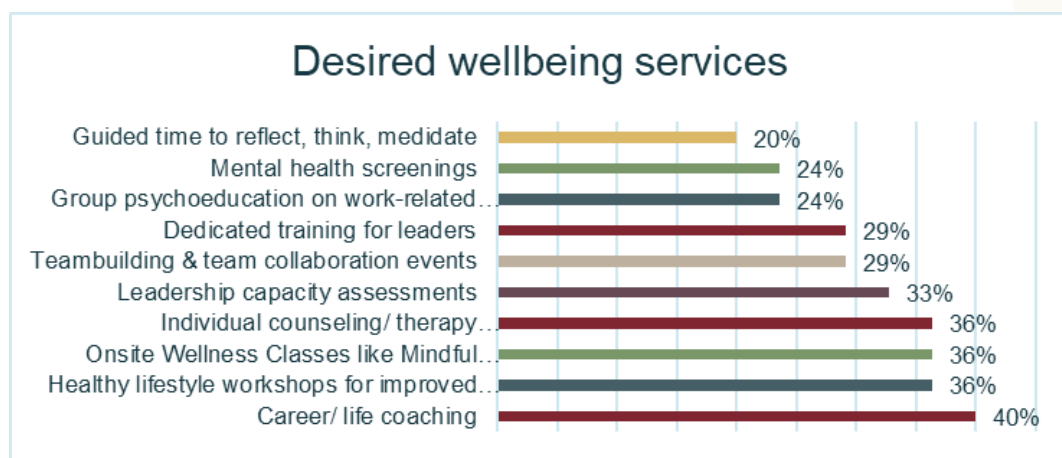
- Reduced working hours
- HR focused on workload
- HR focused on mental health
- Flexible work hours
- Remote work policy
- Increased staff/ resources
- Time to participate in wellbeing activities

5.2. Which professional and personal wellbeing services do you wish you had access to on a regular basis?

Middle managers:

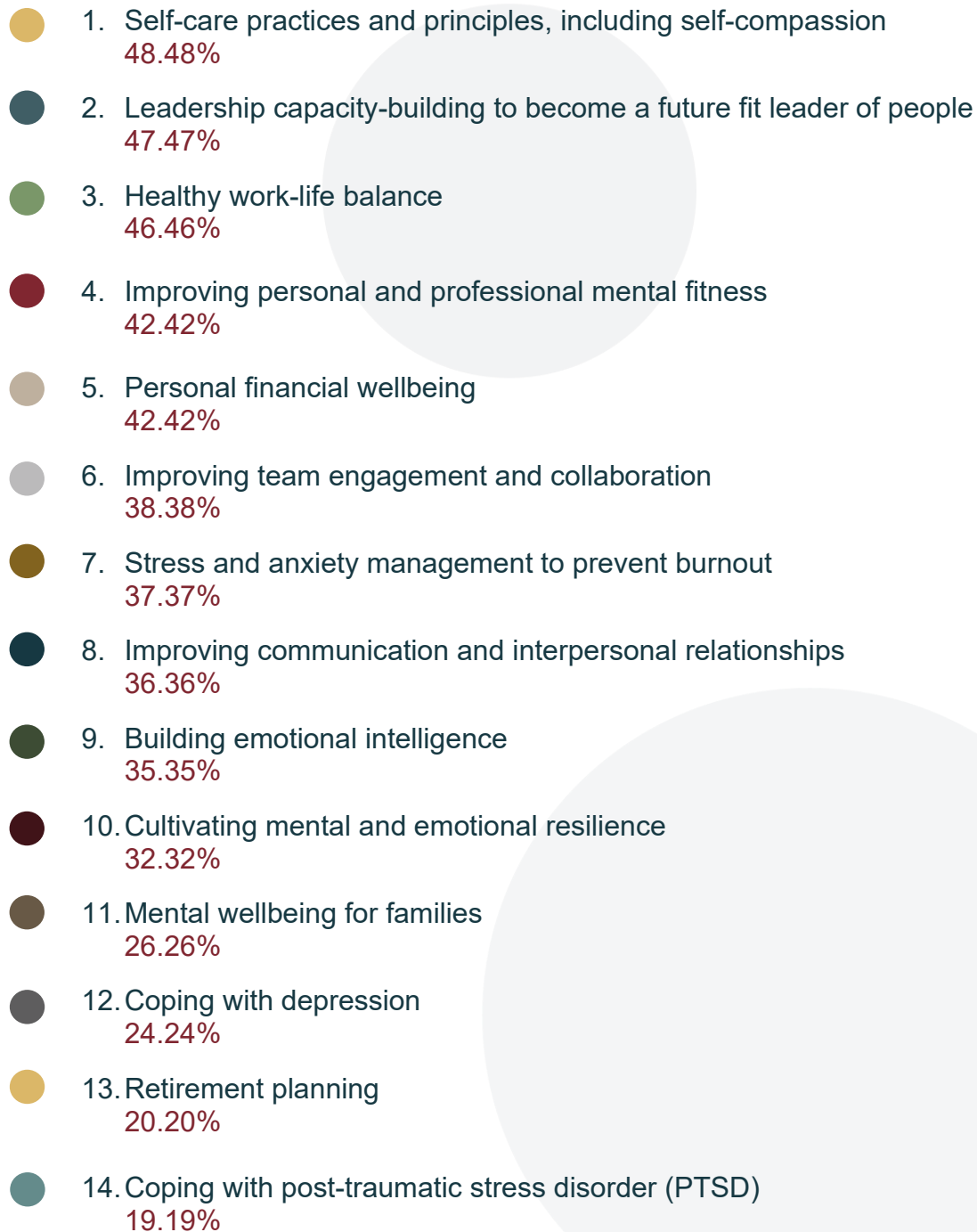


Executives/ senior managers:

















5.3. Which personal and professional development and wellbeing topics are currently a high priority for you? Multiple answers possible.

The women who completed this survey stated the following development and wellbeing topic priorities:

- 
1. Self-care practices and principles, including self-compassion
48.48%
 2. Leadership capacity-building to become a future fit leader of people
47.47%
 3. Healthy work-life balance
46.46%
 4. Improving personal and professional mental fitness
42.42%
 5. Personal financial wellbeing
42.42%
 6. Improving team engagement and collaboration
38.38%
 7. Stress and anxiety management to prevent burnout
37.37%
 8. Improving communication and interpersonal relationships
36.36%
 9. Building emotional intelligence
35.35%
 10. Cultivating mental and emotional resilience
32.32%
 11. Mental wellbeing for families
26.26%
 12. Coping with depression
24.24%
 13. Retirement planning
20.20%
 14. Coping with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
19.19%

The men who completed this survey stated the following development and wellbeing topic priorities:

-  1. Leadership capacity-building to become a future fit leader of people
50.00%
-  2. Improving personal and professional mental fitness
50.00%
-  3. Healthy work-life balance
47.41%
-  4. Building emotional intelligence
43.10%
-  5. Improving team engagement and collaboration
37.93%
-  6. Stress and anxiety management to prevent burnout
31.90%
-  7. Personal financial wellbeing
30.17%
-  8. Self-care practices and principles, incl self-compassion
29.31%
-  9. Cultivating mental and emotional resilience
25.00%
-  10. Mental wellbeing for families
22.41%
-  11. Mental wellbeing for families
26.26%
-  12. Coping with depression
20.69%
-  13. Retirement planning
17.24%
-  14. Coping with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
12.93%

Middle managers from this survey said the following development and wellbeing topics are a high priority for them:

-  15. Leadership capacity-building to become a future fit leader of people
60.00%
-  16. Healthy work-life balance
45.00%
-  17. Improving personal and professional mental fitness
42.50%
-  18. Cultivating emotional intelligence
37.50%
-  19. Improving communication and interpersonal relationships
37.50%
-  20. Improving team engagement and collaboration
37.50%
-  21. Personal financial wellbeing
35.00%
-  22. Self-care practices and principles, including self-compassion
32.50%
-  23. Cultivating mental and emotional resilience
30.00%
-  24. Coping with depression
27.50%
-  25. Stress and anxiety management to prevent burnout
25.00%
-  26. Retirement planning
25.00%
-  27. Mental wellbeing for families
25.00%
-  28. Coping with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
17.5%

Methodology & Demographics

Methodology

We conducted this survey on the State of Mental Health at Work in East Africa with the goal of better understanding employees' views and experiences related to mental health and wellbeing at the workplace; and to compare the findings with our 2023 survey.

217 professional staff across East Africa participated in an online survey during August and September 2025. All respondents were at least 18 years of age and in professional employment. They represented a decent cross-section of the East African workforce in terms of age, gender, education level, job level, industry, and employer size.

The respondents participated voluntarily and did not receive any monetary or other compensation for completing the survey. To promote our study, we mainly used social media, WhatsApp groups and relevant mailing lists.

- **Job level:**
Executive (8%), senior management (18%), middle management (18%), senior professional (45%), junior professional (9%), other (2%)
- **Industry:**
Healthcare (21%), NGO/ non-profit (18%), Government/ public (12%), Banking and finance (10%), Education (9%), Agriculture forestry & fishery (4%), Human Resources (4%), Telecommunications (4%), IT & FinTech (3%), Hospitality and Tourism (3%), Management Consulting (3%)
- **Experience with any mental health services during last 12 months:**
Never (58%), at least once (14%), a few times (18%), often (6%), frequently (3%)
- **Country where currently working:**
Rwanda (75%), Kenya (8%), Ethiopia (7%), Burundi (4%), Uganda (3%), Other (3%)

Demographics

- **Age:**
18-28 (17%), 29-34 (25%), 35-44 (45%), 45-54 (12%), 55+ (2%)
- **Gender:**
Female (46%), male (53%), prefer not to say (1%)
- **Education level:**
High school (1%), Advanced Diploma (5%), Bachelor's (48%), Master's/higher (46%), Other 1%

Conclusion

mHub's 2025 East Africa Workplace Wellbeing data mirrors global trends showing persistently high levels of employee stress. Across the region, employees report growing challenges with disengagement, motivation, concentration, and productivity - driven by the cumulative impact of multiple, compounding stressors.

These findings underscore the critical need for structured, evidence-based employee wellbeing programs rather than once-off, ad hoc, or reactive support. Employers should focus not only on supporting those in distress but also on intentionally building mental fitness skills such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, self-compassion, stress management, emotional intelligence, resilience, adaptability, motivation, and self-efficacy.

Consistent with Gallup's global findings, our data identifies personal financial strain, excessive workloads and time pressure, and poor supervisory or leadership practices as the primary drivers of daily stress and disengagement. Effective wellbeing strategies must therefore strengthen individual coping capacity *and* address the organizational conditions that create stress in the first place.

Employee wellbeing services play an important stress-buffering role. While access to these services is associated with lower stress levels, access alone is insufficient.

Sustainable impact requires programs that deliberately build employee capabilities to manage stress across both personal and professional contexts.

mHub's approach is grounded in a clear principle: effective employee wellbeing programs prioritize the development of core individual competencies that enable employees to:

1. Manage personal challenges that negatively affect their health, wellbeing, and work performance; and
2. Strengthen key wellbeing domains, including mental health, cognitive vitality, resilience, physical health, and work-life balance.

As organizations continue to invest in wellbeing initiatives, a shared understanding of what individual mental health and wellbeing truly entails is essential. Without this clarity, wellbeing efforts risk becoming fragmented, symbolic, or difficult to measure for real impact.

At its core, individual mental health and wellbeing is not defined by the absence of illness alone. Rather, it reflects the extent to which the key domains of a person's life are balanced, supported, and functioning well. When these domains are persistently strained or misaligned, stress accumulates - undermining engagement, performance, health, and retention.

A comprehensive approach to employee wellbeing must therefore address the following interconnected dimensions:

- **Career wellbeing:** employees' experience of their work and work environment, including growth opportunities, recognition, role clarity, manageable workloads, positive team climates, and competent, fair, human-centered leadership.
- **Social wellbeing:** the quality of relationships at work and beyond, which provide connection, emotional support, and a critical buffer against stress.
- **Life purpose and spiritual wellbeing:** a sense of meaning, purpose, belonging, and alignment with personal values or faith - key drivers of resilience and motivation during change and uncertainty.
- **Mental, psychological, and emotional wellbeing:** how individuals think, feel, regulate emotions, maintain perspective, and respond to pressure and adversity.
- **Physical wellbeing:** health and lifestyle factors such as sleep, nutrition, activity, energy levels, and chronic health conditions, all of which directly affect cognitive functioning and performance.
- **Personal financial wellbeing:** perceived financial security, ability to meet obligations, manage debt, and plan for the future. **Notably, our data from 2023 and 2025 show financial stress as the single largest source of employee strain - making it a critical, and often underestimated, wellbeing dimension.**

From an organizational perspective, wellbeing programs should be designed and evaluated across all these domains. Measuring impact requires more than tracking participation or utilization; it requires assessing whether employees' lived experiences are meaningfully improving.

Our research also points to elevated retention risk. Global evidence consistently shows that manager quality, psychological safety, recognition, and growth opportunities are among the strongest predictors of retention. As such, manager capability building must be treated as a central wellbeing intervention. Wellbeing initiatives are most effective when embedded in leadership practice and organizational culture.

Rebuilding connection and trust emerges as another critical priority. In a context of constant transformation and accelerating AI integration, employers have a clear responsibility to ensure that wellbeing strategies actively support psychological safety, human connection, shared purpose, adaptability, and sustained performance.

In this environment, emotional intelligence and empathy are no longer "soft skills." They are foundational leadership capabilities and measurable business drivers - directly influencing engagement, commitment, and performance.

Empathy is becoming a new measure of efficiency. The most effective leaders will not wait for employees to reach breaking point; they will intentionally build cultures that prevent it. At the same time, engagement is not the result of incentives or policies alone - it is the outcome of leadership that genuinely cares.

Based on mHub's 2025 research findings, we recommend three evidence-based staff wellbeing priorities:

1. **Prioritize early intervention and prevention:** Proactively reduce everyday stressors such as excessive workloads, poor role clarity, and blurred boundaries, while normalizing help-seeking before crises emerge.
2. **Implement integrated, systemic wellbeing programs:** Deliver customized, organization-wide strategies that combine manager training, aligned HR policies, targeted mental fitness and psychoeducation across all core wellbeing domains, and on-demand access to individualized support services.

3. **Invest in managers as the primary wellbeing lever:** Position leadership development as a central wellbeing strategy, equipping managers to foster psychological safety, communicate effectively, design sustainable workloads, recognize contribution, and provide meaningful one-to-one support.

Organizations that embed wellbeing into leadership and culture will not only protect their people - they will unlock engagement, resilience, and long-term performance.

About mHub

mHub is a **global mental health organization** that helps people achieve mental and emotional wellbeing. As a social purpose business our work is rooted in the conviction that mental health is a basic human right, and the understanding that *“mental health is a global public good and is relevant to sustainable socio-economic development in all countries”*. (Lancet Commission, 2007 and 2018).

Our **vision** is to contribute to sustainable development by improving the mental health of all.

Our **mission** is to reduce the burden of mental health disorders through bridging gaps in promotion, prevention, and care, by:

- Destigmatizing mental illnesses;
- Empowering people to take good self-care and cultivate resilience;
- Supporting people through curative and non-curative wellbeing interventions;
- Influencing national health policies by advancing mental health research and advocacy; and
- Becoming the first-choice organizational wellness services provider in Africa.

mHub recognizes that employee mental health does not exist in isolation - it is shaped, strengthened, or strained by the workplace itself. Hence, at mHub, our purpose is to partner strategically with organizations to safeguard mental health, build sustainable mental wellbeing, and equip managers and employees with the mental fitness skills and competencies required to thrive in today's demanding world of work. Since 2020 we offer Rwanda's first all-in-one Employee Wellbeing Program – delivering a comprehensive, science-based suite of tailored employee wellbeing solutions, designed to create measurable and lasting impact.

Our approach addresses wellbeing holistically through four interconnected pillars:

- Organizational wellbeing culture - embedding wellbeing into values, systems, and everyday practices
- Leadership capacity development - equipping leaders to model and sustain mentally healthy workplaces, and to lead with empathy, connection and humanity
- Team collaboration and communication - strengthening trust, connection, and psychological safety
- Individual mental health, mental fitness, and overall wellbeing - empowering every individual with mental fitness skills and competences, providing practical tools and professional support

mHub Clinic, Rwanda

Based at our Kicukiro Centre in Kigali, mHub houses a licensed outpatient clinic, where we offer virtual/ digital and onsite clinical services (Individual and Group Counseling; Couples Counseling; Family Counseling; Clinical Supervision; and CPD trainings for mental health professionals).



mHub
THE MENTAL HEALTH HUB

Now, more than ever, mentally fit staff matters to business resilience

“Employers increasingly recognize that employee health and wellbeing are core to performance - and investing in workforce health delivers both upside and reduced pressures, strengthening organizational resilience and capacity for sustained performance in an increasingly uncertain environment.”

(McKinsey Health Institute, January 2026)