Peel Halton Workforce Development Group

PEEL HALTON EMPLOYER SURVEY

2025

Mental Health and Wellness in the Workplace:

Does it Make a Difference to Think it is Important?

Acknowledgements

The first acknowledgment must go to the hundreds of employers who made the effort to complete our survey. Every year, we appreciate that employers take time from their busy schedules to provide their insights through our annual survey on the issues which are most pressing in our local labour market.

We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the following individuals and organizations who contributed to the success of this survey.

Advisory Committee

These individuals provided suggestions regarding the focus and content of the survey.

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Abilities to Work
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Burlington Economic Development
Burlington Downtown BIA
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Caledon Economic Development
COSTI Brampton
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Dale Carnegie
Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre
Family Services of Peel
FEDCAP
Goodwill Career Centre
Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce
Halton Region
Halton Wellness at Work Coalition
HRPA- Peel
Indus Community Services
Job Skills
Malton Neighbourhood Services
Milton Chamber of Commerce
Milton Downtown BIA
Mississauga Board of Trade
Newcomer Center of Peel
Oakville Chamber of Commerce
Oakville Economic Development Office
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Ontario Federation of Agriculture Halton
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Ontario March of Dimes
Peel Career Assessment Services
Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services
Sheridan College
Stride
The Centre for Skills Development & Training
YMCA-HBB
Yonge Lawrence Village BIA
VPI Georgetown
VPI Mississauga
WCG Employment Ontario

Peel Halton Workforce Development Group

The Peel Halton Workforce Development Group (PHWDG) is a community-based, not-for-profit organization that serves the Peel and Halton regions. The PHWDG functions as a neutral broker of research, disseminator of information, and facilitator of collaborative partnership development. The PHWDG works with the community to identify trends and opportunities in the labour market environment which impact our workforce. We then nurture the ideas, which emerge from our consultations and seek to develop partnerships to address these issues, to further help our community to thrive in our local economy. Operating as part of the Local Boards Network of Ontario, PHWDG is one of 26 local planning board areas funded by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development to conduct and distribute local labour market research and engage community stakeholders in planning processes that support local solutions to local labour market challenges.

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An electronic version of this document as well as the survey questionnaire are available at: https://www.peelhaltonworkforce.com/employer-surveys/

Executive Summary

This survey represents the 15th year that the Peel Halton Workforce Development Group (PHWDG) has administered an employer survey. This year's survey focused on mental health and wellness in the workplace, with over half of the questions devoted to this topic. The remaining questions covered trends relating to remote work, the impact of workforce or business changes on employers, including technological and environmental considerations, as well as the consequences of US tariffs, and reliance on and knowledge about the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

Two major findings of the survey are:

1) There is a correlation between the incidence of mental health and wellness concerns and the degree to which an employer places importance on issues related to mental health and wellness in their organization; a correlation does not mean one causes the other, but that responses to these two questions track in the same direction: high incidence and high importance go together.

2) Most of the other responses about mental health and wellness also seem to have a relationship to this incidence and importance correlation; employers who have higher incidences of and place greater importance on mental health and wellness concerns:

   i. Report higher impacts on their organization on such issues as the need to adjust the employee benefit package, the number of short- and long-term leave requests, and the level of employee conflict or toxic behaviours, among others

   ii. Are more likely to report that the incidence of mental health and wellness concerns has been increasing

   iii. Are more likely to consult with staff or to track metrics regarding mental health and wellness issues

   iv. Are more likely to provide mental health days, an Employee Assistance Program or wellness apps or subscriptions

   v. Are more likely to feel very confident in their ability to support employees with mental health and wellness concerns.

The survey was administered between September 15 and October 24, 2025. This survey was distributed electronically through various channels such as social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter), the PHWDG website, e-mail campaigns and PHWDG's community partners. In total, 243 employers started the survey and the average number of respondents per question was 128.

The survey is not a random sample, but its respondents are generally representative of the characteristics of employers in Peel and Halton, except in the case of a few categories:

- Thirty percent of the survey respondents have 100 or more employees, compared to 2% of all establishments in Peel and Halton; similarly, firms with 1-4 employees make up a much smaller proportion of the survey compared to their share of all establishments
- By industry, the survey share of Manufacturing firms is far higher, while the share of Transportation and Warehousing is far lower; the only other industries where there is a larger discrepancy are Accommodation & Food Services, Educational Services, Other Services, and Retail Trade
- There are slightly more employers completing the survey from Halton Hills, and fewer employers from Brampton, compared to their share of all employers across Peel and Halton

Overall, the number of employers completing this annual survey has been declining over the last three years, even though there have been limited changes in either the length of the survey or how it is distributed. This in itself can be considered a finding of the survey, that employers have become fatigued with surveys or that they may feel so taken up with their day-to-day demands that they feel they do not have the time to complete a survey.

Over half of the respondents indicated that over the last two years staff have asked to learn more about ways to better support people with mental health and wellness needs.

It is also worth pointing out that 243 respondents started the survey and began answering questions about their location, industry and employee size of their organization. Yet on the first question, which was relatively simple ("rank the importance of mental health and wellness to your organization"), a third dropped out at that point. It seems more likely that when directly asked the question, those who did not feel it was an important issue might have decided they saw no purpose in continuing the survey.

Of course, there is no way of knowing for certain. But it may serve our understanding of the survey results as not necessarily representing the views of all employers, but rather of those employers who are more likely to believe the issue is very important or a critical priority.

As a result, the survey also compared results for two categories of respondents:

- "Lower importance" respondents: those who felt that the importance of mental health and wellness to their organization was "not important," "somewhat important" or "important"
- "Higher importance" respondents: those who felt that the importance of mental health and wellness to their organization was "very important" or a "critical priority"

Over three-quarters of respondents (77%) said that mental health and wellness was either very important or a critical priority to their organization. This was more likely to be the case for very small (1-4 employees) and very large (100 or more employees) organizations.

When asked in what ways the incidence of mental health and wellness issues was of concern to their organization, over 60% referred to the impact on productivity as well as on the level of employee engagement. Among the range of impacts reviewed, smaller firms (1-4 or 5-19 employees) often expressed lower levels of impact for many of these items, while larger firms (100 or more employees) are much more likely to note there was an impact with respect to short- or long-term leave requests, requests for hybrid or remote work, and the need to adjust the employee benefit package.

Almost half of respondents feel that the incidence of mental health and wellness issues has increased somewhat or significantly, while another third say it has stayed the same. Only one in ten say it has decreased somewhat or significantly. Slightly fewer than one in eight are not sure. The smallest firms (1-4 employees) and the largest firms (100 or more employees) are more likely to feel the incidence has increased.

Over half of the respondents indicated that over the last two years staff have asked to learn more about ways to better support people with mental health and wellness needs. Another four in ten of respondents have felt uncertain about how to start a conversation with an employee where a mental health and wellness concern was suspected, while a third felt they had not managed the situation as well as they would have liked. In most cases, this has happened once or twice, but at least one in ten said it has happened more than once or twice.

Many employers do have practices relating to messaging and corporate culture that seek to address mental health and wellness concerns in their organization, though a much smaller proportion track mental health-related metrics.

Many employers also have policies relating to how work is carried out that would contribute to mental health and wellness, such as safe workplace policies, mental health days, negotiating hybrid work, flexibility regarding overtime, accommodating employees with caregiver responsibilities, and ensuring that employees have input or options when it comes to scheduling their hours of work. However, fewer have specific accommodation policies for employees with mental health and wellness concerns.

Where these policies exist, employees tend to make use of them (in the 75% to 89% range), with only the accommodations for employees with caregiver responsibilities being used slightly less (69%).

On the issue of remote work, there has been an overall declining trend in the proportion of employers who say they have employees who can work remotely.

There is a considerable difference among respondents in terms of what specific supports are provided to employees to support mental health and wellness:

- More than seven out of ten provide prescription drug coverage and/or supplemental health insurance
- Half to two thirds provide mental health days, short- and long-term disability and Employee Assistance Program
- Over one-third make available on-site or virtual counseling
- Three in ten offer wellness apps or subscriptions
- One in five provide subsidies for special programs, such as gym membership, exercise classes, yoga classes

The general trend is that the larger the firm by employee size, the higher the percentage of employers who provide the support, though there is less variation by firm size when it comes to the provision of mental health days.

A little over a third of respondents feel very confident in their organization's ability to support employees with mental health and wellness concerns, one half feel somewhat confident, and one in ten feel not very confident or not at all confident, rising to almost two out of ten among firms with 5-19 employees.

When it comes to areas where respondents felt their organization could improve their actions to better address the mental health and wellness needs of their employees, at least six out of ten respondents felt there was room for improvement with respect to:

- Manager training around empathetic leadership and psychological safety
- Ensuring supervisors and managers are responsive to the mental health and wellness circumstances of employees
- Messaging to employees to assure they feel comfortable disclosing mental health and wellness concern
- Better communications for reducing the stigma about mental health and wellness challenges and/or calling out behaviours that are not tolerated

It is noteworthy that these four items all involve messaging and the climate established by the organization, its managers and supervisors.

On the other hand, half or more respondents felt there was no need for change to:

- Prescription drug coverage (not surprising, as this was the support most likely to be provided by employers)
- Policies regarding hybrid or remote work (given that employers have been fine-tuning this policy for several years, it may be that they don't feel it needs further adjustment)
- Employee Assistance Program, including access to psychologists or other mental health professionals (slightly over half of respondents say they provide an Employee Assistance Program)
- Providing flexibility regarding workload, hours of work and scheduling of work

On the issue of remote work, there has been an overall declining trend in the proportion of employers who say they have employees who can work remotely. There is a decline in the proportion of workers who are not working at all remotely, and notable increases among those working hybrid (especially half their time remotely) and those working all their time remotely.

By employee size categories:

- Small firms (1-4 employees) have higher proportions of employees working mainly from home
- Firms with 5-19 and 20-99 employees have roughly equal proportions of employees working largely in the workplace and working hybrid
- Large firms (100 or more employees) also have around half of their employees working hybrid, around one-third working primarily in the workplace, with a slightly higher proportion working remotely most of the time

In terms of how various workforce or business changes were impacting their organization over the past six months, respondents expressed increasing concerns regarding costs, inflation and the pressure to increase wages. The next three prominent concerns were: challenges with supply chains, challenges recruiting either mid-level or senior level workers, and commuting or transportation challenges.

When asked about specific technological and environmental changes, the biggest current and future impacts were:

- Cyber-security (highest combined current and future impact)
- Digitalization
- Cloud-based technology
- Real time data collection, management and analysis
- Artificial intelligence (the latter having the largest expected future impact)

Respondents further identified how these changes would impact their workforce:

(1) Workers will need skills upgrading

(2) The uncertainty makes business planning a challenge

(3) Productivity will increase

As well, more employers feel that jobs will be lost rather than that new jobs will be created.

When asked about the impact of US tariffs, respondents said the biggest challenge they face has been coping with the impact uncertainty has had on their business planning, now and in the future. Other significant impacts are or are expected to be the need to restrict spending, the disruption of supply chains and having to raise prices.

Seven out of ten of respondents neither use nor are considering using the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. Even among those who use or are considering using the program, only four out of ten are aware of recent changes to the program, except where six out of ten know that they must pay foreign workers the posted prevailing wage for the occupation and location.

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Introduction

This survey represents the 15th year that the Peel Halton Workforce Development Group (PHWDG) has administered an employer survey. This year's survey focused on mental health and wellness in the workplace, with over half of the questions devoted to this topic. The remaining questions covered trends relating to remote work, the impact of workforce or business changes on employers, including technological and environmental considerations, as well as the consequences of US tariffs, and reliance on and knowledge about the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

The survey was administered between September 15 and October 24, 2025. This survey was distributed electronically through various channels such as social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter), the PHWDG website, e-mail campaigns and PHWDG's community partners.

Methodology

In total, 243 employers started the survey, but that number was reduced to 164 after the survey was "cleaned up" – surveys with no substantive answers were eliminated. Also, where respondents provided contact information, their responses relating to their industry classification were checked and, where necessary, corrected. For the remaining substantive questions, the average number of respondents per question was 128.

When it comes to the analysis of the survey results, the lower overall response rate only allowed for cross-tabulations by firm size (however, the sample size for establishments with 1-4 employees is lower than desired, so that results for this category should be treated with caution). These cross-tabulations are only provided where it is relevant and where the differences by employee size categories provide a useful insight. We identify outliers as those employee categories where the scoring is lower or higher by 25% or more than the average score for any response.

The survey is not a random sample survey. It is based on which employers are contacted, and which employers choose to respond to the survey. The survey sample is compared in its various characteristics (in particular, industry and size) to the distribution of all employers in the survey target area as one gauge of the degree to which the survey represents the universe of employers in Peel and Halton Regions. We also believe that the cross-tabulated comparisons provide insights into how different labour market issues were experienced by employers depending on the number of their employees.

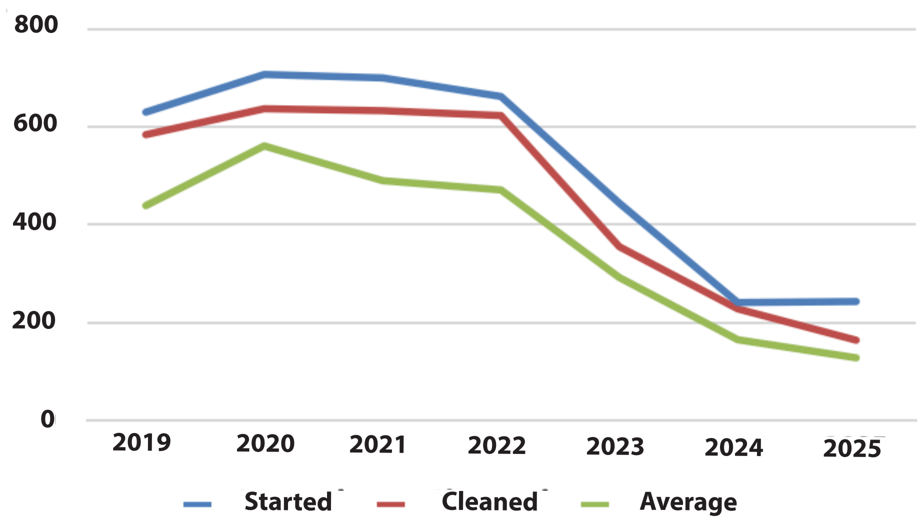
This year, the number of respondents who started the survey held steady, however, a larger number dropped out at the fist substantive question . . . meaning more respondents dropped out of the survey compared to last year.

Number of responses compared to previous years

The number of responses this year are considerably below what they were in 2022, after which time there has been a steady decrease in the average number of survey responses. Chart 1 shows these trends.

Prior to 2020, the number of respondents had been increasing (the chart shows the figures going back six years). Between 2020 and 2022, the numbers pretty much held steady, although they did drop for the average number of responses per question. In 2023, the figures fell in all categories by 30-45%, and in 2024, they fell again by 30-45%. It was not the case that more respondents started dropping out halfway through the survey – rather, fewer were even starting the survey, compared to previous years. This year, the number of respondents who started the survey held steady, however, a larger number dropped out at the fist substantive question and the average number of responses per question also declined, meaning more respondents dropped out of the survey compared to last year.

Chart 1: **Employer survey responses, 2019-2025**



Started: Refers to number that started the survey
Cleaned: Refers to number after the survey has been cleaned of those with no substantive answers
Average: Average number of responses per substantive question

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Profile of employers

The PHWDG survey, while focusing on Peel and Halton, also attracts employers across the Greater Toronto Area, as local partners who disseminate the survey through their e-mailing lists often engage with employers beyond the boundaries of these two regions. As a result, while a clear majority (72%) of the respondents are employers in Peel and Halton, many come from other parts of the GTA (Table 1).

To gauge how representative, the survey sample is, Table 1 focuses on the responses from Peel and Halton and compares how the survey distribution matches that actual distribution of establishments with employees in Peel and Halton. Respondents were allowed to list as many locations as applied to their business, resulting in many more responses than respondents. According to these results, employers from Halton Hills are over-represented in the survey sample, while employers from Brampton are under-represented.

Table 1: Distribution of survey respondents by municipality

	SURVEY		Actual in Peel/Halton Percent
	Municipality	Number	
Brampton	29	13%	35%
Mississauga	78	36%	34%
Caledon	16	7%	5%
Oakville	23	11%	11%
Milton	18	8%	5%
Halton Hills	27	13%	3%
Burlington	25	12%	8%
TOTAL PEEL + HALTON	**216**	**100%**	**100%**
City of Toronto	33		
Durham Region	10		
York Region	18		
Outside GTA	25		

Actual distribution of Peel and Halton employers from Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, June 2025

For many industry sectors, the proportionate share of survey respondents rather closely matches the actual share present in Peel and Halton.

Table 2 profiles the distribution of survey responses by industry. Two calculations have been provided. Firstly, the actual number of all survey responses by industry, together with their percentage distribution (the first and second column of figures in Table 2). The third column shows the actual percentage distribution of employers in Peel and Halton (with the Management of Companies excluded to match the survey industry options).

For many industry sectors, the proportionate share of survey respondents rather closely matches the actual share present in Peel and Halton. There are, however, two sectors where there is a considerable difference:

- Manufacturing (16.5% of the survey responses compared to 4.4% of all Peel and Halton employers)
- Transportation and Warehousing (3.7% of the survey responses compared to 20.7% of Peel and Halton all employers)

Otherwise, the only industries where the spread between the survey and the actual distribution by industry is greater than 4% are Accommodation & Food Services, Educational Services, Other Services, and Retail Trade.

Table 2: Distribution of survey respondents by industry

Industry	TOTAL SURVEY		Actual Percent of employers in Peel and Halton
	Number	Percent	
Accommodation and Food Services	1	0.6%	5.5%
Administrative & Support, Waste Management	6	3.7%	4.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1	0.6%	0.3%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	6	3.7%	0.8%
Construction	10	6.1%	8.8%
Educational Services	16	9.8%	1.2%
Finance and Insurance	3	1.8%	2.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	19	11.6%	9.1%
Information and Cultural Industries	1	0.6%	0.9%
Manufacturing	27	16.5%	4.4%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0	0.0%	0.0%
Other Services (except Public Administration) †	23	14.0%	6.8%
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	29	17.7%	16.6%
Public Administration	2	1.2%	0.1%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1	0.6%	4.3%
Retail Trade	5	3.1%	8.4%
Transportation and Warehousing	6	3.7%	20.7%
Utilities	1	0.6%	0.0%
Wholesale Trade	7	4.3%	5.3%
TOTAL	**164**	**100.0%**	**100.1%**

Actual distribution of Peel and Halton employers from Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, June 2025
† Such as automotive repair, hairdressing or dry-cleaning services

When we compare the number of survey respondents to the actual number of employers by size of establishment, we can see different response rates by size category

Table 3 profiles the survey respondents by number of employees. Once again, the distribution of all survey respondents is compared to the actual distribution of establishments with employees present in Peel and Halton by size of establishments.

Very small enterprises (1-4 employees) account for two-thirds (66%) of all establishments with employees in Peel and Halton, but a much smaller proportion of survey respondents, at 11%. Instead, survey respondents tend to represent larger firms, and the largest size category, 100 or more employees, accounts for three out of ten (30%) survey respondents, whereas this category only accounts for 2% of all employers in Peel and Halton. However, for the sake of this survey, we feel there is a healthy distribution of responses by different size categories, allowing us to analyze the differences in responses between employers.

When we compare the number of survey respondents to the actual number of employers by size of establishment, we can see different response rates by size category: 2.8% of firms with 100 or more employees in Peel and Halton responded to the survey (one in 36), while 0.7% of firms with 20 to 99 employees took the survey (one in 143).

Table 3: Distribution of survey respondents by number of employees (Peel and Halton)

	Number of employees			
	1-4	**5-19**	**20-99**	**100+**
ACTUAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYERS BY SIZE IN PEEL AND HALTON				
Actual number	55829	19743	7631	1732
Actual percent	66%	23%	9%	2%
DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYERS BY SIZE IN THE SURVEY				
Survey number	18	45	50	48
Survey percent	11%	28%	31%	30%
RATIO OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS TO ACTUAL				
Survey as percent of actual in Peel and Halton	0.03%	0.2%	0.7%	2.8%

Actual distribution of Peel and Halton employers from Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, June 2025

The survey was usually completed by a person who was either the owner, CEO or senior management, or someone in Human Resources (Table 4). A smaller proportion of respondents were either a manager, supervisor or team lead. In the "Other" category, there were a number who fit into these first three categories, as well as a few who were in front-line roles or who were executive assistants. Respondents had been allowed to choose more than one response, so the totals add up to more than 100%

Table 4: Position of person completing the survey

Position	Percent
Owner/CEO/President/Senior management	53%
Human Resources	32%
Manager/Supervisor/Team Lead	15%
Other	13%

Mental health and wellness in the workplace

The next eleven questions in the survey examined issues relating to mental health and wellness in the workplace.

Ranking the importance of mental health and wellness to the organization

Respondents were first asked how they would rank the importance of mental health and wellness to their organization (Table 5).

Over three-quarters of respondents (77%) say that mental health and wellness is either very important or a critical priority to their organization. This is more likely to be the case for very small (1-4 employees) and very large (100 or more employees) organizations.

There are two ways to look at these results. At one level, it suggests that among employers, mental health and wellness issues rank very highly in importance to their organization.

At another level, one needs to consider the motivation of those who started the survey. If mental health and wellness in the workplace is not an important issue to an employer, how likely is it that they will choose to respond to a survey asking about mental health and wellness in the workplace? It is also noteworthy that 243 respondents started the survey and began answering questions about their location, industry and employee size of their organization. Yet on the first question, which was relatively simple ("rank the importance of mental health and wellness to your organization"), a third dropped out at that point. It seems more likely that when directly asked the question, those who did not feel it was an important issue might have decided they saw no purpose in continuing the survey.

Of course, there is no way of knowing for certain. But it may serve our understanding of the survey results as not necessarily representing the views of all employers, but rather of those employers who are more likely to believe the issue is very important or a critical priority.

Table 5: Ranking the importance of mental health and wellness to the organization

	ALL	1-4	5-19	20-99	100+
Not important	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Somewhat important	6%	0%	9%	6%	4%
Important	15%	11%	20%	16%	8%
Very important	64%	78%	57%	59%	73%
Critical priority	13%	11%	11%	16%	13%
Unsure	2%	0%	2%	2%	2%

Four of these categories attracted at least 20% (one in five) of respondents saying there was a lot of impact.

Impact of incidence of mental health and wellness issues on the organization

Respondents were asked the degree to which the incidence of mental health and wellness issues had an impact on different aspects of the organization. Chart 2 illustrates the responses.

The chart is ordered in terms of the highest scores for areas that register a lot of impact. Four of these categories attracted at least 20% (one in five) of respondents saying there was a lot of impact:

- Productivity
- Level of employee conflict/toxic behaviour
- Absenteeism
- Level of employee engagement

If one looks at those respondents who answered either "a lot of impact" or "some impact," then two issues represented over 60% of respondents:

- Productivity
- Level of employee engagement

Chart 2 represents a mix of responses (degree of impact) across a large range of issues relevant to an organization. In order to compare results of different categories of employers, it is easier to create a composite score, one which "summaries" the result for each item. One does this by assigning values to each response, as follows:

- For each "not a concern", value = 0
- For each "very little impact," value = 1
- For each "some impact," value = 2
- For each "a lot of impact," value = 3

One adds up all the values for each item and divide by the total number who provided the four answers.

Chart 2: Degree to which the incidence of mental health and wellness issues are a concern in terms of different aspects of the organization

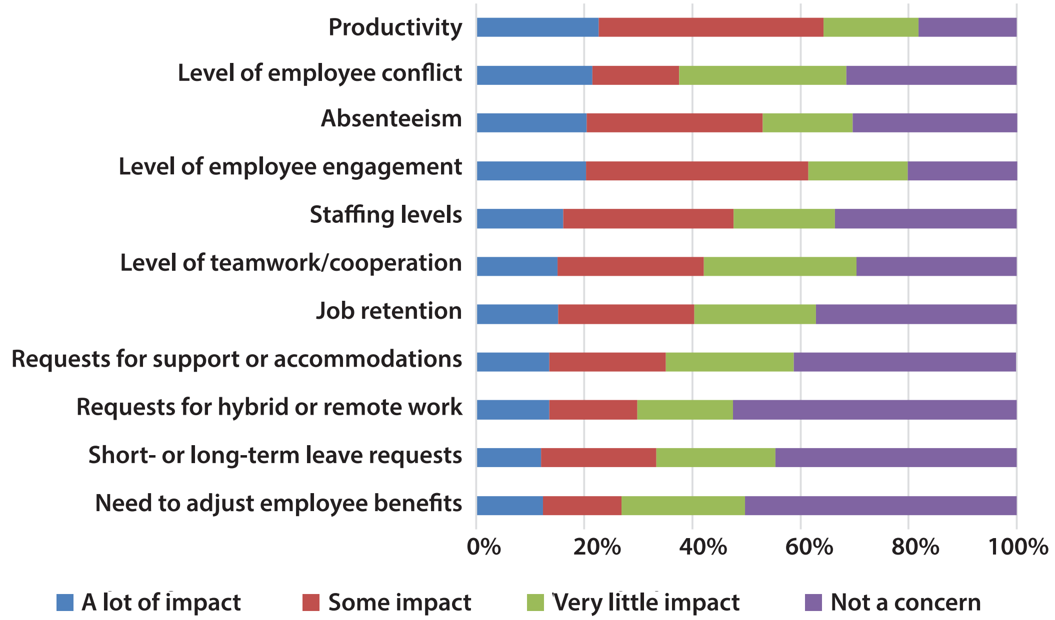

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Table 6 shows these composite scores for all responses, as well as for the different size categories by number of employees. An additional two categories have been created:

- Less important: those employers who said mental health and wellness issues were either not important, somewhat important or important to their organization
- More important: those employers who said mental health and wellness issues were either very important or a critical priority to their organization

Table 6: Composite score for level of concern for each organizational impact by different categories of employers

	ALL	1-4 employees	5-19 employees	20-99 employees	100+ employees	Less important	More important
Productivity	1.69	1.33	1.47	1.76	1.98	1.64	1.70
Level of employee engagement	1.61	1.50	1.16	1.80	1.91	1.64	1.61
Absenteeism	1.43	0.94	1.19	1.59	1.72	1.65	1.38
Staffing levels	1.30	1.44	0.93	1.34	1.60	1.06	1.36
Level of teamwork/ cooperation	1.28	0.82	1.11	1.47	1.44	1.28	1.28
Level of employee conflict	1.28	0.67	1.07	1.51	1.48	0.93	1.36
Job retention	1.19	1.18	0.95	1.24	1.33	0.90	1.26
Requests for support/ accommodations	1.07	0.80	0.93	1.07	1.31	0.86	1.13
Short- or long-term leave requests	1.01	0.47	0.74	1.00	1.44	0.73	1.08
Requests for hybrid or remote work	0.91	0.38	0.81	0.9	1.24	0.88	0.91
Need to adjust employee benefits	0.89	0.75	0.60	0.8	1.37	0.61	0.96

The employer categories represented by those for whom mental health and wellness issues are less or more important provide some interesting observations.

The responses in Table 6 are listed by each issue from highest level of impact to lowest. The colour-coding represents those cells where the composite score is either lower by 25% or more than the average score (orange shading), or higher by 25% or more than the average score (green shading).

It appears that smaller firms (1-4 or 5-19 employees) often express lower levels of impact for many of these items, while larger firms (100 or more employees) are much more likely to note there is an impact for the following items:

- Short- or long-term leave requests
- Requests for hybrid or remote work
- Need to adjust employee benefit package

The employer categories represented by those for whom mental health and wellness issues are less or more important provide some interesting observations. Those employers who assign lesser importance to mental health and wellness issues are less likely than all employers to report impacts in terms of the level of employee conflict or toxic behaviours, or in terms of short-term or long-term leave requests.

Compared to those employers who did not rate mental health and wellness issues of high importance, employers who rate these issues as very important or a critical priority are far more likely to note much higher impacts with regards to the following issues (starting with the biggest difference):

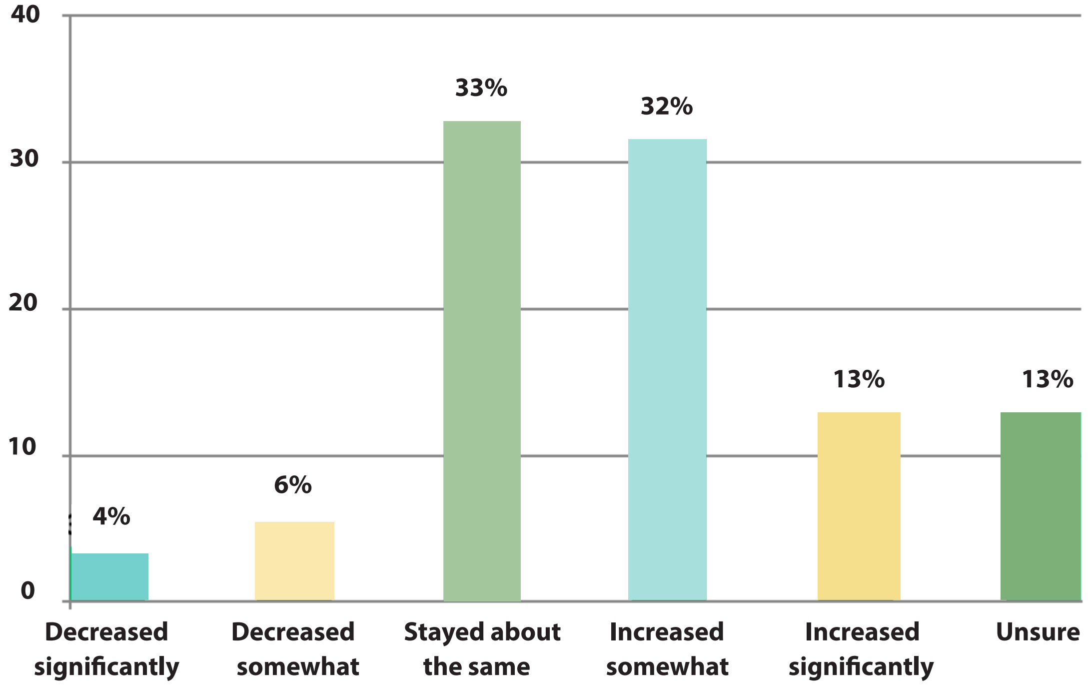
- Need to adjust employee benefit package
- Short- or long-term leave requests
- Level of employee conflict/toxic behaviours
- Job retention
- Requests for support or accommodations from employees
- Staffing levels

This suggests that those employers who experience more impacts across a range of dimensions because of the incidence of mental health and wellness issues are more likely to indicate that mental health and wellness concerns are a higher priority for their organization.

Trend in incidence of mental health and wellness concerns over past two years

Respondents were asked to what extent had the incidence of mental health and wellness concerns changed among employees in their organization. Chart 3 illustrates the responses for all employers.

Chart 3: Change in incidence of mental health and wellness concerns



A sizeable proportion of employers (45%) feel that the incidence of mental health and wellness issues has increased somewhat or significantly, while another third (33%) say it has stayed the same. Only 10% say it has decreased somewhat or significantly. Slightly fewer than one in eight are not sure.

Comparisons across categories require a composite score, calculated as follows:

- For each response of "decreased significantly," value = minus 2
- For each response of "decreased somewhat," value = minus 1
- For each response of "stayed about the same," value = 0
- For each response of "increased somewhat," value = plus 1
- For each response of "increased significantly," value = plus 2

The smallest firms (1-4 employees) are most likely to feel that the incidence of mental health and wellness has increased, followed by the largest firms (100 or more employees).

These values are added up and divided by the total number providing one of these five answers. The results, together with the proportion answering "unsure," are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Composite score for change in incidence of mental health and wellness, as well as percentage saying unsure about the answer

	ALL	1-4 employees	5-19 employees	20-99 employees	100+ employees	Less important	More important
Composite score	0.51	0.94	0.39	0.31	0.69	0.26	0.58
Unsure	13%	11%	7%	14%	17%	21%	11%

The smallest firms (1-4 employees) are most likely to feel that the incidence of mental health and wellness has increased, followed by the largest firms (100 or more employees). Those employers who assign lesser importance to mental health and wellness issues are much less likely to feel that the incidence has increased, while those who assign this issue higher importance are more than twice as likely to feel it is increasing.

Interestingly, those employers who assign lesser importance to mental health and wellness issues are much more likely to say they are unsure (21%, or one in five), followed by employers with 100 or more employees.

41% have felt uncertain about how to start a conversation with an employee where a mental health and wellness concern was suspected.

Incidence of specific circumstances arising in relation to mental health and wellness

Respondents were asked the frequency with which the following circumstances had arisen in their workplace over the previous two years:

- Requests from staff to learn more about ways to better support people with mental health and wellness needs
- Situations where they had not been able to manage their response to a mental health and wellness issue as well as they would have liked
- Situations where they suspected a mental health and wellness issue but were not sure how to start a conversation with the employee or how to provide support

The responses for all employers are presented in Table 8. A large proportion (41% to 56%, depending on the question) indicate that the described circumstance has not arisen in the last two years. But another considerable proportion have experienced these circumstances, in particular, where staff have asked to learn more about ways to better support people with mental health and wellness needs (in total, over half – 52%, though more often once or twice). Another 41% have felt uncertain about how to start a conversation with an employee where a mental health and wellness concern was suspected (again, more often once or twice). A further 33% felt they had not managed the situation as well as they would have liked (once again, usually once or twice).

When these circumstances are examined by the sub-categories of employers, the only significant outliers are in relation to the incidence of staff asking to learn about how better to support people with mental health and wellness needs, as follows:

- A much higher incidence among firms with 100 or more employees
- A much lower incidence about firms which place a low priority on the importance of mental health and wellness issues in the workplace

Larger firms may require more institutional assistance when it comes to addressing these issues; among smaller firms, perhaps the more intimate setting allows for engagement and discussion. In the previous questions, the hypothesis has been that a lower incidence of these issues may cause firms to rate these concerns at a lower priority; that lower incidence may explain why among these firms fewer employees may be asking for additional learnings for how to address these issues.

Table 8: Incidence of specific circumstances arising in relation to mental and health and wellness

	Not at all	Has happened once or twice	Has happened more than once or twice	Has happened often	Unsure/not applicable
Requests from staff to learn more about ways to better support people with mental health and wellness needs	41%	29%	14%	9%	7%
Situations where they had not been able to manage their response to a mental health and wellness issue as well as they would have liked	56%	21%	8%	4%	11%
Situations where they suspected a mental health and wellness issue but were not sure how to start a conversation with the employee or how to provide support	47%	29%	8%	4%	12%

Responding to mental health and wellness challenges in the workplace

The next set of questions probed employers about what strategies they had adopted or considering adopting to respond to mental health and wellness challenges in their workplaces. The questions were framed in terms of three levels of responses:

- Overall messaging and corporate culture
- Corporate policies and practices about how work is carried out (the pace, timing and location of work, and accommodations for work)
- Supports provided by the organization/business

The first of these questions examines messaging and corporate culture. Respondents were provided with a list of actions or policies and were asked which of the following best describing their use of each item:

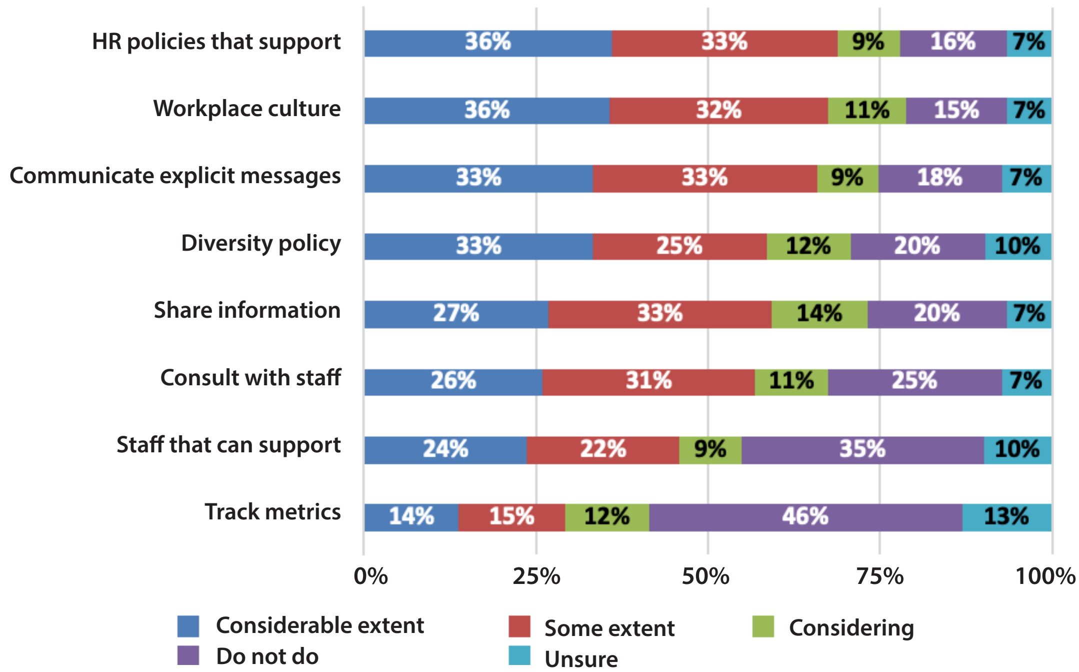
- We do not do this
- We are considering doing this
- We do this to some extent
- We do this to a considerable extent
- Unsure/not applicable

The box below lists each of the items as described in the survey. For the purpose of reporting on the results, abbreviations are used to reduce the clutter in the chart and table that follow.

ITEM	ABBREVIATION
We communicate explicit messages to employees that it is safe to disclose mental health and wellness concerns	Communicate explicit messages
We share information (workshops, newsletters, other communication) on mental health and wellness issues to employees	Share information
We have human resources policies that outline support and accommodations to employees facing mental health and wellness issues	HR policies that support
We consult with staff to get their input on how we can best respond to their mental health and wellness concerns	Consult with staff
We have policies that support a workplace culture and/or explicit leadership support that encourages open conversations and reduces stigma about mental health and wellness concerns	Workplace culture
We have a diversity policy that includes the rights of employees with mental health and wellness challenges	Diversity policy
We have HR professional(s), disability manager(s), and/or accommodation staff who have training, or access to professionals with training, to help our employees with mental health and wellness challenges	Staff that can support
Our organization tracks mental health-related metrics (e.g., survey of employees, usage of benefits related to mental health issues, short- and long-term disability requests due to mental health, etc.)	Track metrics

Chart 4 presents the results for all employers.

Chart 4: Employer practices relating to overall messaging and corporate culture



There are four practices which many employers engage in (around a third to a considerable extent and usually another third to some extent):

- We have human resources policies that outline support and accommodations to employees facing mental health and wellness issues
- We have policies that support a workplace culture and/or explicit leadership support that encourages open conversations and reduces stigma about mental health and wellness concerns
- We communicate explicit messages to employees that it is safe to disclose mental health and wellness concerns
- We have a diversity policy that includes the rights of employees with mental health and wellness challenges

There are another three practices that around a quarter of employers engage in to a considerable degree, and a good proportion to some degree:

- We share information (workshops, newsletters, other communication) on mental health and wellness issues to employees
- We consult with staff to get their input on how we can best respond to their mental health and wellness concerns
- We have HR professional(s), disability manager(s), and/or accommodation staff who have training, or access to professionals with training, to help our employees with mental health and wellness challenges

There is a final practice which is used by a much smaller proportion of employers, where almost half (46%) say they do not use:

- Our organization tracks mental health-related metrics (e.g., survey of employees, usage of benefits related to mental health issues, short- and long-term disability requests due to mental health, etc.)

To make comparisons across categories of employers, we rely on a composite score, calculated in the usual way, using the following values:

- "We do not do this," value = 0
- "We are considering doing this," value = 1
- "We do this to some extent," value = 2
- "We do this to a considerable extent," value = 3

. . . notably those practices easier to implement when there are four or fewer employees, such as communicating explicitly, sharing information or consulting with staff.

Table 9 displays the results.

Table 9: Composite score for employer practices relating to overall messaging and corporate culture

	ALL	1-4 employees	5-19 employees	20-99 employees	100+ employees	Less important	More important
Communicate explicit messages	1.88	2.46	1.58	1.57	2.35	1.56	1.98
Share information	1.70	2.17	1.03	1.43	2.55	1.52	1.76
HR policies that support	1.96	1.75	1.45	2.06	2.48	1.70	2.03
Consult with staff	1.62	2.08	1.30	1.43	2.03	1.00	1.81
Workplace culture	1.95	2.17	1.58	1.89	2.30	1.67	2.03
Diversity policy	1.80	2.00	1.26	1.77	2.35	1.52	1.88
Staff that can support	1.38	1.25	0.52	1.34	2.40	1.23	1.43
Track metrics	0.97	0.91	0.34	0.89	1.85	0.64	1.07

The colour-shading highlights cells that are 25% or more higher than the average (green shading) or 25% or more less than the average (orange shading).

Large firms (100 or more employees) are much more likely to apply this range of practices. Firms with 1 to 4 employees also are more likely to apply some of them (notably those practices easier to implement when there are four or fewer employees, such as communicating explicitly, sharing information or consulting with staff).

Firms with 5 to 19 employees scored much lower in terms of using these practices. Firms that do not view mental health and wellness issues as very or critically important score lower on all these practices compared to firms that do view these issues as critical important to their organization.

Only firms with 100 or more employees appear to score well when it comes to tracking metrics related to this topic.

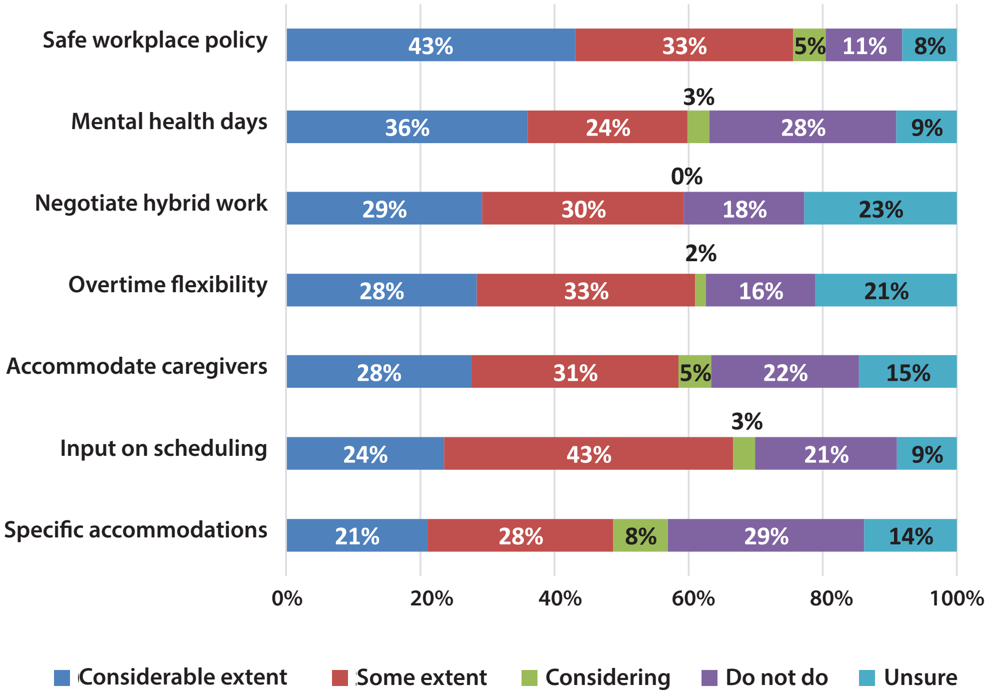
The second question on policies and practices related to how work is carried out. The same scale as before was used ("do not to this" to "do to a considerable extent"). Once again, the practices have been abbreviated for the purpose of presentation, as follows:

ITEM	ABBREVIATION
Employees have input and/or options when it comes to scheduling their hours of work	Input on scheduling
For employees who could work remotely, the option exists to negotiate the nature of remote or hybrid work or to make use of remote or hybrid work	Negotiate hybrid work
We provide mental health or personal days	Mental health days
We have a flexible policy relating to when or how overtime work is required	Overtime flexibility
We have a psychologically safe workplace policy that defines workplace behaviours that are not tolerated	Safe workplace policy
We have specific accommodation policies for employees with mental health and wellness concerns (e.g. more frequent or flexible break times, quiet workplaces or places to withdraw to, modified duties, etc.)	Specific accommodations
We have policies for accommodating employees who have caregiver responsibilities	Accommodate caregivers

Those firms that do not rank mental health and wellness issues as of very high importance also are much less likely to provide mental health days.

Chart 5 presents the results.

Chart 5: Employer practices relating to how work is done



The most common practice related to how work is carried out is having a psychologically safe workplace policy, using to a considerable extent by 43% of employers, and to some extent by another 33%.

Next, there is roughly the same proportion of use of five practices, with one quarter to one third saying they use them to a considerable extent: mental health days, negotiation of hybrid work, flexibility for when overtime takes place, accommodating employees with caregiver responsibilities, and employee input on scheduling.

The last item has the lowest level of usage, namely specific accommodation policies for employees with mental health and wellness concerns. Around two out of ten (21%) employers do so to a considerable extent, and close to three out of ten (28%) do so to some extent.

There is less variation on these practices by employee categories, except in relation to specific accommodation policies, where large firms (100 or more employees) and small firms (1 to 4 employees) are much more likely to use them, whereas they are less likely to be used by firms that have 5 to 19 employees and by firms that do not rank mental health and wellness issues as of very high importance.

Those firms that do not rank mental health and wellness issues as of very high importance also are much less likely to provide mental health days, while firms with 1 to 4 employees are much more likely to accommodate employees with caregiver responsibilities.

The final question on employer policies and practices related to the extent to which employees either contribute to these policies or make use of these policies. The items examined are listed below, together with their abbreviated forms.

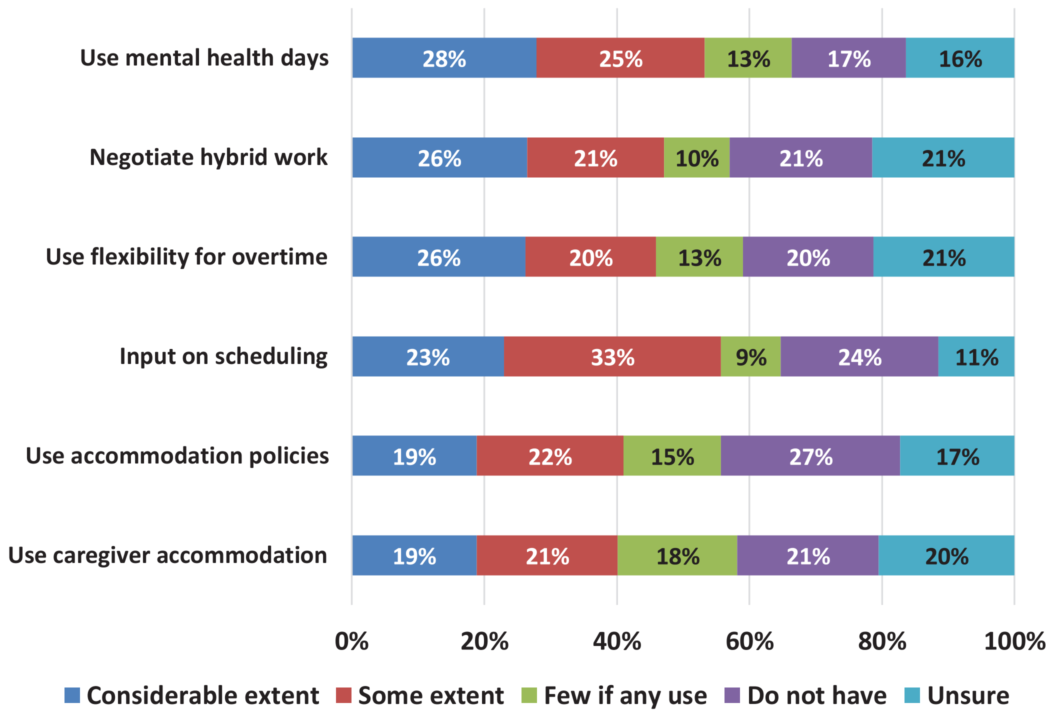
ITEM	ABBREVIATION
Employees provide input and/or have options when it comes to scheduling their hours of work	Input on scheduling
For employees who could work remotely, employees negotiate the nature of their remote or hybrid work or make use of remote or hybrid work	Negotiate hybrid work
Employees use mental health or personal days off to manage their mental health and wellness	Use mental health days
Employees use our flexible policy relating to when or how overtime work is required	Use flexibility for overtime
Employees use our accommodation policies for mental health and wellness concerns (e.g. more frequent or flexible break times, quiet workplaces or places to withdraw to, modified work, etc.)	Use accommodation policies
Employees use our accommodation policies for their caregiver responsibilities	Use caregiver accommodation

The options on these practices were:

- We do not have this policy
- Few, if any employees, use this
- Employees use to some extent
- Employees use to a considerable extent

Chart 6 illustrates the results.

Chart 6: Employee use of policies related to mental health and wellness

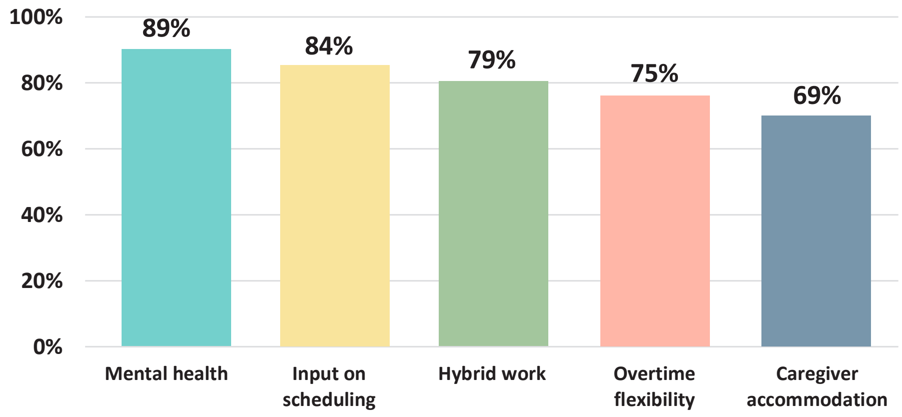


Employers report far less variation in the use of those practices and policies that employees have access to for reducing mental health and wellness concerns. Given that these policies and practices are available to varying degrees, what is more interesting is the usage by policy and practice. To make that comparison simple, one compares these two findings:

1) The percentage of employers saying they engage in a practice, either to some or a considerable extent
2) The percentage of employers saying their employees make use of a practice, either to some or a considerable extent

Chart 7 shows (2) as a percentage of (1), those employees making use of a policy or practice that is available.

Chart 7: Employee use of policies or practices related to mental health and wellness



From what employers indicate, usage of these policies and practices appear high (three-quarters or more), with only the accommodations for employees with caregiver responsibilities being used slightly less.

Respondents were asked regarding what formal supports they provide to employees related to mental health and wellness.

Supports provided by the organization

Respondents were asked regarding what formal supports they provide to employees related to mental health and wellness. The options provided in the survey are listed below, together with their abbreviated form.

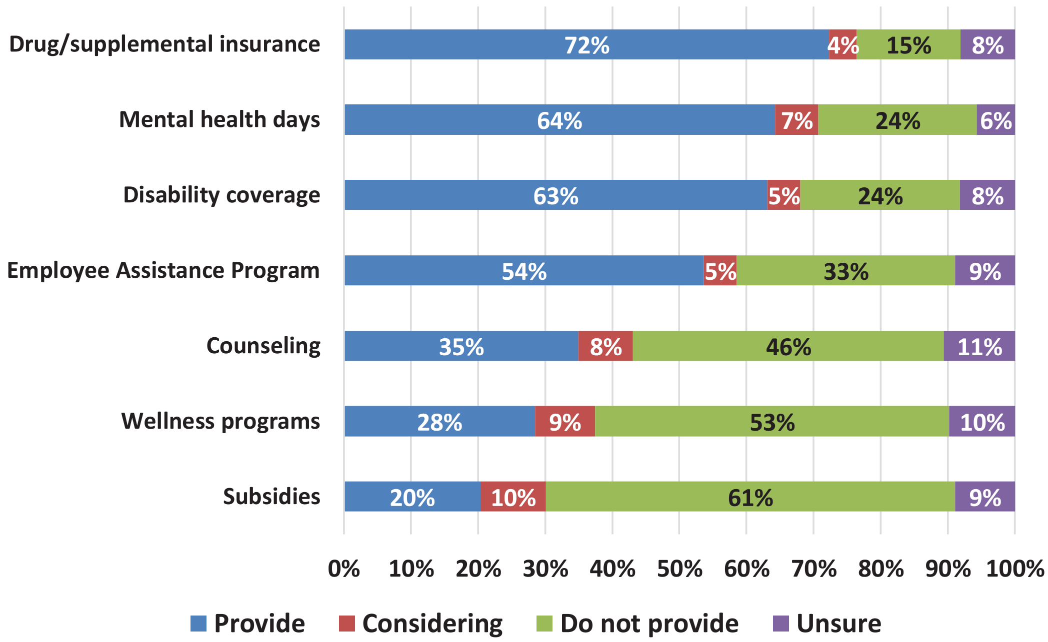
ITEM	ABBREVIATION
Employee Assistance Program, including access to psychologists or other mental health professionals	Employee Assistance Program
Prescription drug coverage and/or supplemental health insurance	Drug/supplemental insurance
Short- or long-term disability	Disability coverage
On-site or virtual counseling	Counseling
Mental health or personal days or flexible leave	Mental health days
Wellness apps or subscriptions	Wellness programs
Subsidy for special programs (e.g., gym membership, exercise classes, yoga classes)	Subsidies

The answer options were:

- We do not provide this
- We are considering providing this
- We provide this
- Unsure/not applicable

Chart 8 shows the answers.

Chart 8: Provision of supports by employer



There is a considerable difference in the provision of these supports:

- More than seven out of ten (72%) provide prescription drug coverage and/or supplemental health insurance
- Half to two thirds (54% to 64%) provide mental health days, short- and long-term disability and Employee Assistance Program
- Over one-third (35%) make available on-site or virtual counseling
- Three in ten (28%) offer wellness apps or subscriptions
- One in five (20%) provide subsidies for special programs

Respondents who rated mental health and wellness as very important or a critical priority are more likely to provide each support

Table 10 shows results across employer categories, comparing the percentage of respondents who provided each support. A few observations:

- The general trend is that the larger the firm by employee size, the higher the percentage of employers who provide the support" to "The general trend is that the larger the firm by employee size, the higher the percentage of employers who provide the support
- There is less variation by firm size when it comes to the provision of mental health days
- Respondents who rated mental health and wellness as very important or a critical priority are more likely to provide each support than those respondents who provided a rating of "important" or less, although the difference by support varies considerably

Table 10: Percentage of respondents providing each support

	ALL	1-4 employees	5-19 employees	20-99 employees	100+ employees	Less important	More important
Drug/supplemental insurance	72%	29%	62%	84%	94%	68%	74%
Mental health days	64%	57%	68%	59%	71%	52%	69%
Disability coverage	63%	31%	50%	70%	86%	55%	65%
Employee Assistance Program	54%	29%	38%	54%	83%	39%	59%
Counseling	35%	29%	15%	41%	54%	29%	37%
Wellness programs	28%	7%	12%	30%	54%	19%	32%
Subsidies	20%	7%	6%	22%	40%	16%	22%

Confidence in organization’s ability to support employees with mental health and wellness concerns

The next question asked, “How confident are you in your organization’s ability to support employees with mental health and wellness concerns?” Table 11 shows the percentage distribution of responses, by employer categories and by the answer options.

Table 11: Level of confidence in organization’s ability to support employees with mental health and wellness concerns

	ALL	1-4 employees	5-19 employees	20-99 employees	100+ employees	Less important	More important
Not confident at all	3%	7%	6%	0%	3%	3%	3%
Not very confident	7%	0%	12%	5%	6%	13%	5%
Somewhat confident	50%	57%	53%	54%	43%	55%	49%
Very confident	35%	29%	24%	38%	46%	19%	40%
Unsure	4%	7%	6%	3%	3%	10%	2%

By and large, only a small proportion of respondents express little or no confidence when it comes to confidence in their organization’s ability to support employees. There are, however, subtle differences in how high the confidence can go:

- Almost all categories have at least half of their respondents choosing “somewhat confident;”
- Large firms (100 or more employees) have the highest level of “very confident” responses;
- Firms with 20-99 employees have the highest level of combined “somewhat” and “very confident” responses;
- Small firms have slightly more confident responses than firms with 5-19 employees;
- Firms that did not rate mental health and wellness concerns as very important have the highest score for “not very confident” and the lowest score for “very confident”

Areas where organization could improve its actions to better address the mental health and wellness needs of employees

Employers were asked to identify areas where their organization could improve their actions to better address the mental health and wellness needs of their employees, using the following list (abbreviated version provided)

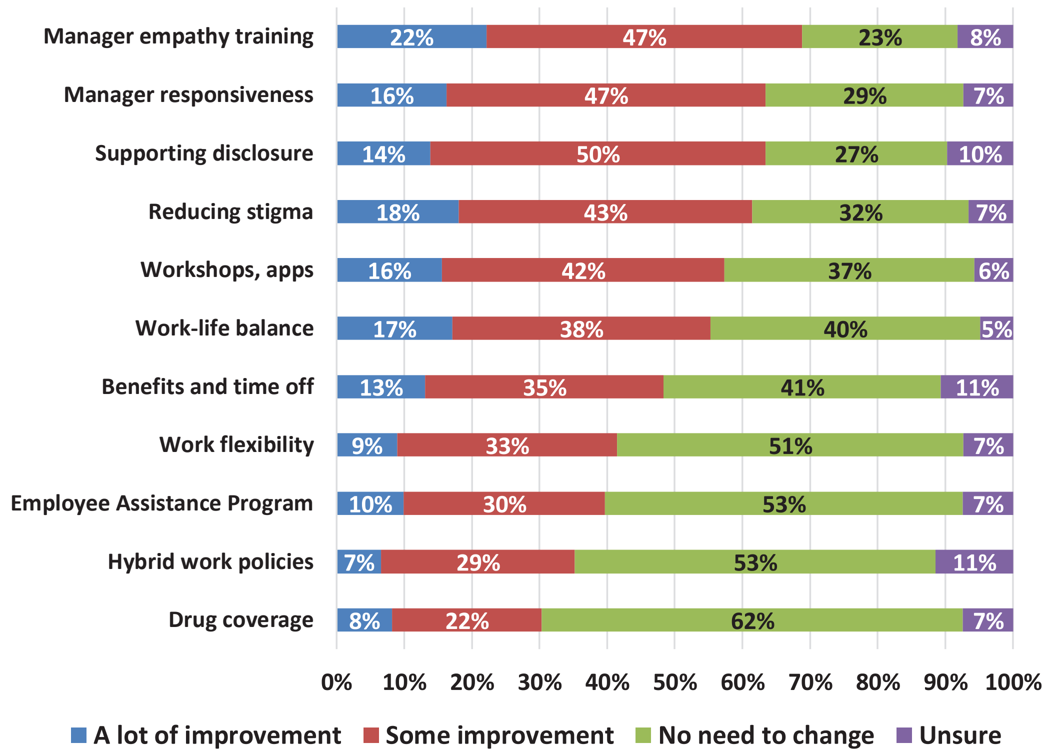
ITEM	ABBREVIATION
Messaging to employees to assure they feel comfortable disclosing mental health and wellness concerns	Supporting disclosure
Establishing a healthy work-life balance	Work-life balance
Providing flexibility regarding workload, hours of work and scheduling of work	Work flexibility
Ensuring supervisors and managers are responsive to the mental health and wellness circumstances of employees	Manager responsiveness
Providing appropriate supports to employees through the benefit package or time off for personal days, short-term or long-term disability	Benefits and time off
Policies regarding hybrid or remote work	Hybrid work policies
Prescription drug coverage	Drug coverage
Manager training around empathetic leadership and psychological safety	Manager empathy training
Employee Assistance Program, including access to psychologists or other mental health professionals	Employee Assistance Program
Workshops, programs or apps for employees relating to mental wellness	Workshops, apps
Better communications for reducing the stigma about mental health and wellness challenges and/or calling out behaviours that are not tolerated	Reducing stigma

Respondents were asked to indicate their assessment as follows:

- Does not need to change (for composite scoring, value = 0)
- Could use some improvement (value = 1)
- Could use a lot of improvement (value = 2)
- Unsure

Chart 9 displays the results for all respondents.

Chart 9: **Areas for improvement to address mental health and wellness concerns**



There were four items where at least six out of ten respondents felt there was room for improvement (somewhat or a lot):

- Manager training around empathetic leadership and psychological safety
- Ensuring supervisors and managers are responsive to the mental health and wellness circumstances of employees
- Messaging to employees to assure they feel comfortable disclosing mental health and wellness concern
- Better communications for reducing the stigma about mental health and wellness challenges and/or calling out behaviours that are not tolerated

It is noteworthy that these four items all involve messaging and the climate established by the organization, its managers and supervisors.

Firms with 20-99 and 100 or more employees were more likely to feel the need for improvement in relation to work flexibility

At the bottom of the scale, where half or more respondents felt there was no need for change, were:

- Prescription drug coverage (not surprising, as this was the support most likely to be provided by employers)
- Policies regarding hybrid or remote work (given that employers have been fine-tuning this policy for several years, it may be that they don't feel it needs further adjustment)
- Employee Assistance Program, including access to psychologists or other mental health professionals (slightly over half of respondents say they provide an Employee Assistance Program)
- Providing flexibility regarding workload, hours of work and scheduling of work

When the responses are analyzed by employer categories, the following insights emerge:

- Small firms (1-4 employees) are much less likely to feel the need for improvement in the following areas:
  - Hybrid work policies
  - Work-life balance
  - Manager empathy training
  - Reducing stigma
  - Work flexibility
  - Manager responsiveness
  - Supporting disclosure
- On the other hand, these same small firms are much more likely to say they feel the need to improve with respect to:
  - Prescription drug coverage
  - Benefits and time off
- Firms with 20-99 and 100 or more employees were more likely to feel the need for improvement in relation to work flexibility
- Firms with 100 or more employees were much less likely to express the need to improve in the areas of the Employee Assistance Program and workshops, programs and apps

Final comments regarding mental health and wellness in the workplace

For the last question in the part of the survey exploring mental health and wellness in the workplace, respondents were asked if they had additional comments they wished to make. In total, 27 respondents left a message, 11 of whom said they had no additional comment (save for one who thought it was not a good survey and another who said the survey had great questions).

Otherwise, the comments were highly diverse, from some providing examples of the kinds of mental health and wellness supports they provide, to others expressing the challenges experienced by a small business providing extended supports or benefits. Others cited the need for more resources, for OHIP to cover counselling or for the government to lower taxes to reduce the financial strain that contributes to anxiety. Several spoke to the need for other employees to understand issues related to mental health, or that there was a need to build resilience among workers, especially the upcoming generation. On the other hand, a couple of individuals expressed the view that sometimes mental health issues are used as a cover to avoid work.

Remote work

The next two questions probed the current extent of remote work. The first question was a screening question, asking employers in principle, regardless of their remote work policies, whether their organization has employees who could do their work remotely. Table 12 shows the responses, including for the various categories of employers, and compares the results to the 2023 and 2024 responses.

There appears to be an overall declining trend in the proportion of employers who say they have employees who can work remotely. By and large, this view applies across almost all employer categories.

Table 12: Employers who have employees who could work remotely

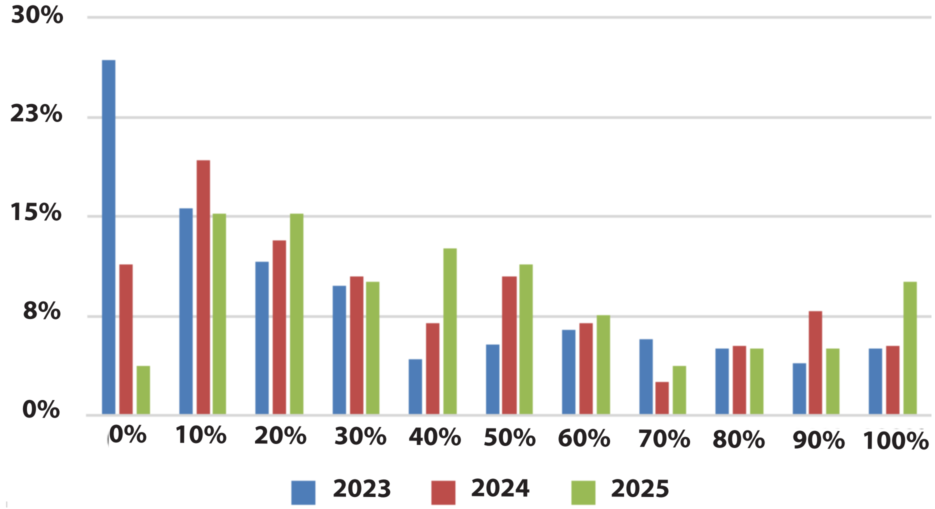
CATEGORY	2023	2024	2025
ALL RESPONDENTS	**80%**	**71%**	**68%**
1-4 employees	72%	55%	69%
5-19 employees	68%	50%	58%
20-99 employees	82%	83%	56%
100 or more employees	92%	82%	88%
Peel	85%	63%	70%
Halton	77%	73%	65%

The next question asked what percentage of a typical employee's work is carried out remotely. Chart 10 displays the responses expressed as a percentage of their work time, where 0% means there is no remote work and 100% means that all a typical employee's time is spent working remotely. Once again, the responses are compared to the answers provided in 2023 and 2024.

Overall, there is a decline in the proportion of workers who are not working at all remotely (0%), and notable increases among those working hybrid (especially half their time remotely) and those working 100% of their time remotely.

Since 2022, the survey has asked about the current incidence of remote work.

Chart 10: Percent of time working remotely, 2023, 2024 and 2025



This question has been asked several times now since COVID first struck in 2020. During the pandemic, we asked not only about the current incidence of remote work, but also about what had been the practice before COVID, and what employers were predicting once COVID ended. Since 2022, the survey has asked about the current incidence of remote work. As a result, we have seven distinct time frames for responses, as follows:

BEFORE	Incidence of remote work before COVID
DURING	Incidence of remote work during COVID
AFTER	Predicted incidence of remote work after COVID
2022	Incidence of remote work in 2022
2023	Incidence of remote work in 2023
2024	Incidence of remote work in 2024
2025	Incidence of remote work in 2025

In order the make comparisons easier, the percentage distribution of remote work has been clustered into three groups:

- 0% to 20% of time spent working remotely
- 30% to 70% of time spent working remotely
- 80% to 100% of time spent working remotely

Chart 11: **Percentage of time working remotely, before COVID, during COVID, predicted after COVID, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025**

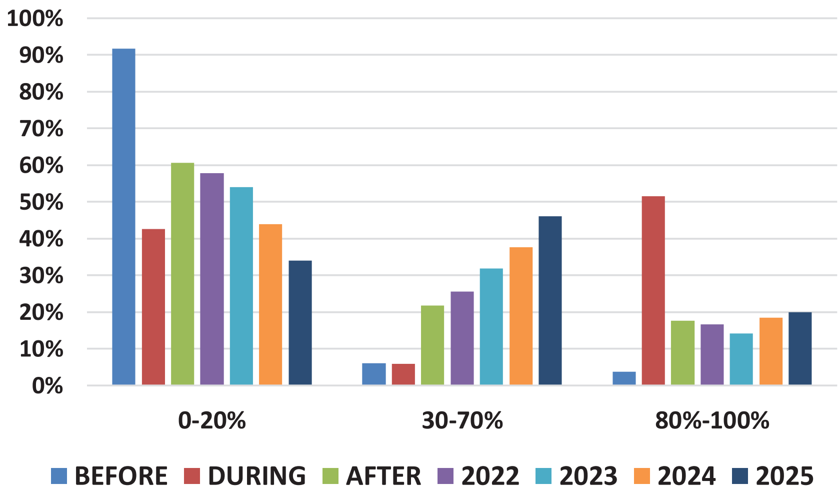


Chart 11 probably tells the most complete story, because it has the benefit of trends over time. Before COVID, around 90% of employees worked most of their time in the workplace. During COVID, with lockdowns and the desire for social distancing, this changed considerably, and around half of employees were working most of their time remotely. After COVID, we did not return completely to the pre-COVID practices; moreover, over these last several years, there has been a trend toward less time spent mainly in the workplace (0% to 20% of the time), and an increasing proportion of employees have been working hybrid (30% to 70% of their time remotely). It is striking how each year, the hybrid proportion has been increasing. While the proportion of employees working most of their time (80% to 100%) remotely was declining, in 2024 that proportion increased slightly and has stayed at the same level in 2025.

There are significant variations by employer categories:

- Small firms (1-4 employees) have higher proportions of employees working mainly from home
- Firms with 5-19 and 20-99 employees have roughly equal proportions of employees working largely in the workplace and working hybrid
- Large firms (100 or more employees) also have around half of their employees working hybrid, around one-third working primarily in the workplace, with a slightly higher proportion working remotely most of the time

Employers were next asked to indicate how various workforce or business changes were impacting their organization over the past six months.

Recent workforce or business changes

Employers were next asked to indicate how various workforce or business changes were impacting their organization over the past six months, in such areas a recruiting, hiring and retaining workers, as well as other issues such as costs or supply chain difficulties. For each item named, employers were asked whether it was decreasing, staying the same or increasing.

Table 13 provides the results for all respondents. (The composite score is calculated by subtracting the number of respondents answering "decreasing" from the number answering "increasing," and dividing by the number of who provided a substantive answer, that is, all except answering "unsure/not applicable.")

Table 13: Workforce or business changes

	Decreasing	Staying about the same	Increasing	Composite score
The impact of rising costs or inflation on your organization	0%	17%	75%	0.82
Pressure to increase wages	0%	16%	73%	0.82
Challenges with supply chains (sourcing goods or services needed for our organization)	6%	27%	32%	0.40
Challenges recruiting either mid-level or senior level workers	9%	34%	36%	0.34
Commuting challenges affecting employee attendance and/or transportation challenges affecting timely deliveries	7%	38%	31%	0.31
Challenges recruiting entry-level workers	12%	42%	27%	0.19
Number of new hires of entry-level workers	13%	48%	24%	0.13
Hiring newcomers (immigrants who have arrived in Canada in the last five years)	9%	44%	18%	0.13
Challenges retaining either mid-level or senior level workers	15%	44%	23%	0.10
Number of new hires of mid-level or senior level workers	11%	55%	18%	0.09
Challenges retaining entry-level workers	15%	49%	17%	0.02
Hiring temporary foreign workers	13%	22%	6%	-0.17
Hiring workers from temp employment agencies	17%	28%	6%	-0.21
Hiring international students	17%	23%	6%	-0.23

By far, costs, inflation and the pressure to increase wages have grown as concerns for these respondents. The next three items are: challenges with supply chains, challenges recruiting either mid-level or senior level workers, and commuting or transportation challenges.

Only three items show a decline in the last six months:

- Hiring of temporary workers
- Hiring of workers from temp employment agencies
- Hiring of international students

For all other hiring (of mid-level or senior level workers, entry-level workers or newcomers), the number saying these have been increasing is always larger than those saying it is decreasing.

Drilling deeper by employer categories, one finds:

- The impact of rising costs, inflation and the pressure to increase wages is felt equally across all size firms
- Challenges with supply chains are especially a problem for firms with 5-19 employees
- Large firms (100 or more employees) are more likely to express increasing challenges both recruiting and retaining all levels of workers
- Hiring of international students and foreign temporary workers has declined for everyone except large firms (100 or more employees)

Impacts of technological and environmental changes and of US tariffs

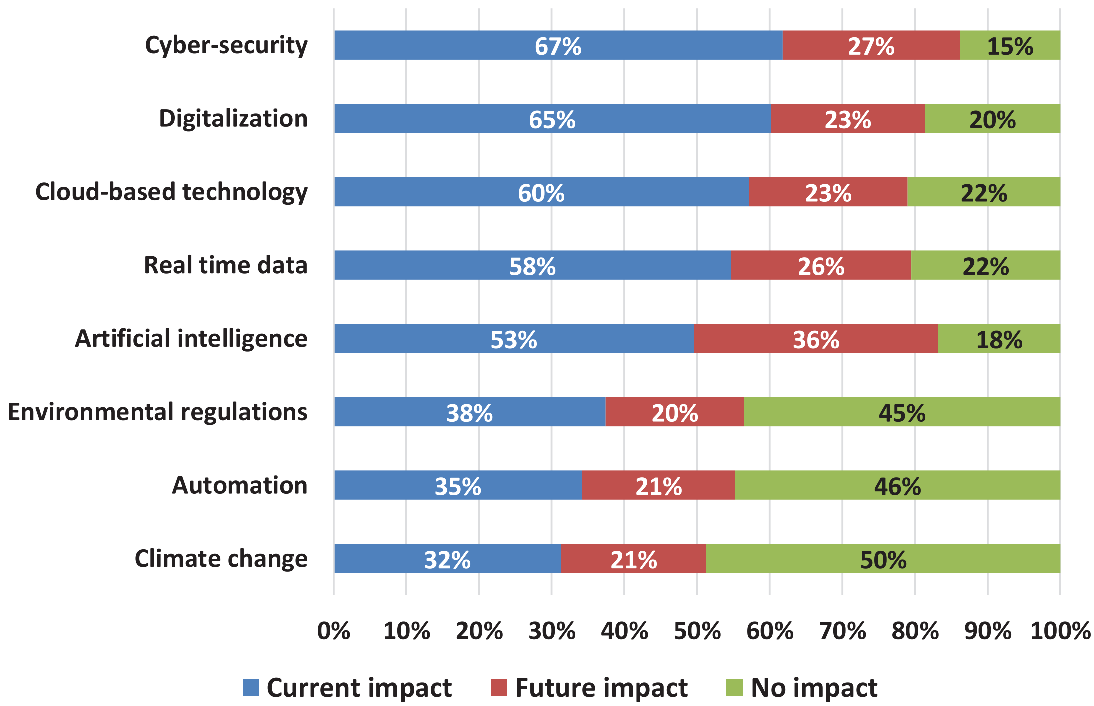
Impacts of technological and environmental changes

The next question focused on the impact of several technological and environmental changes, asking employers for each item whether they felt no impact, a current impact or expected a future impact. The table below lists the changes and provides the abbreviations used in Chart 12.

ITEM	ABBREVIATION
Digitalization	Digitalization
Real time data collection, management and analysis	Real time data
Automation, autonomous equipment and robotics	Automation
Cloud-based technology	Cloud-based technology
Artificial intelligence	Artificial intelligence
Cyber-security	Cyber-security
Climate change	Climate change
Environmental regulations	Environmental regulations

The other three items also have a considerable impact, although they score between 40% and 50% as having no impact

Chart 12: Impact of technological and environmental changes



Many of these changes pose a significant impact, both now and in the future. Five of them register a current impact among half of all respondents, and a future impact in the 20% to 36% range:

- Cyber-security (highest combined current and future impact)
- Digitalization
- Cloud-based technology
- Real time data collection, management and analysis
- Artificial intelligence (the latter having the largest expected future impact)

The other three items also have a considerable impact, although they score between 40% and 50% as having no impact:

- Climate change
- Automation, autonomous equipment and robotics
- Environmental regulations

All size firms view climate and environmental regulations having much the same impact. When it comes to the various technology categories, small firms (1-4 employees) are much less likely to feel that there will be much of an impact.

On the same topic, respondents were further asked what the impact of these changes on their workforce would be (Table 14).

Several key messages stand out: (1) workers will need skills upgrading; (2) uncertainty is a challenge; and (3) productivity will increase. As well, more employers feel that jobs will be lost rather than that new jobs will be created. When the results are examined by employer categories, there are no clear patterns, except that smaller firms (1-4 and 5-19 employees) are more likely to feel that these changes will facilitate remote work.

Table 14: Impacts on the workforce of technological and environmental changes

Impact	Percent
Our workforce will need continuous upskilling or reskilling	65%
The uncertainty about impacts will make business planning more challenging	56%
Our workforce will need advanced computer skills	49%
Workforce productivity will improve	47%
Our workforce will need data management skills	44%
Our workforce will need project management skills	30%
Our workforce will decrease - some jobs will be lost	29%
Health and safety requirements will change	23%
Our workforce will increase – new jobs will be created	21%
It will facilitate remote work arrangements	17%

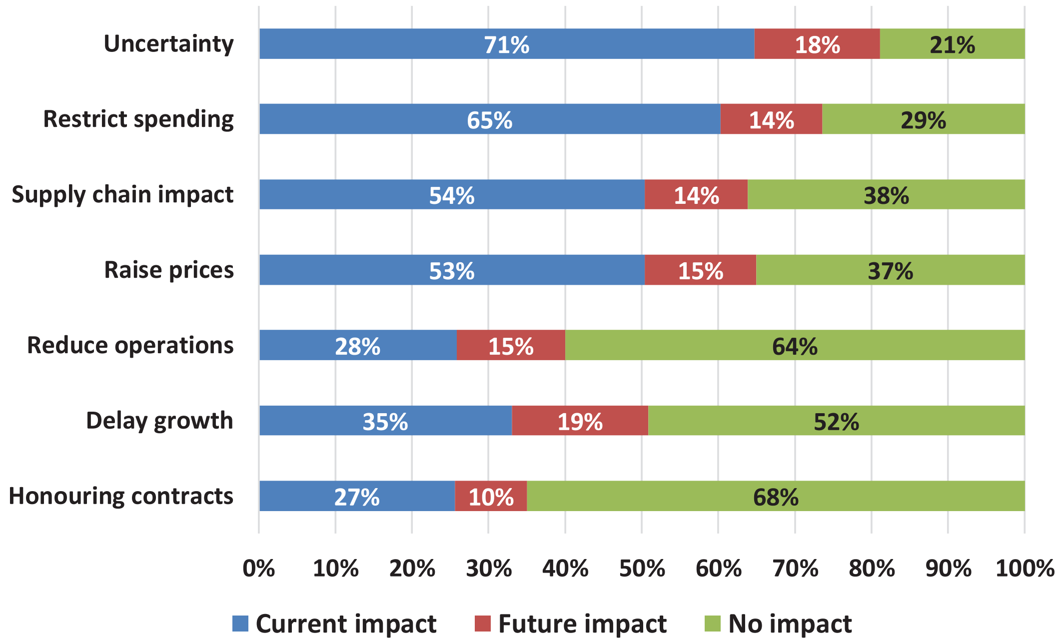
Impact of US tariffs

Next, respondents were asked to assess the impact of US tariffs on various aspects of their business, with the response options being no impact, a current impact or a future impact. The options are listed below, together with their abbreviations, and Chart 13 illustrates the responses.

ITEM	ABBREVIATION
We will reduce our hours, staff and our operations	Reduce operations
We will delay growth/expansion plans	Delay growth
Our supply chain will be impacted	Supply chain impact
We will have to raise our prices	Raise prices
We will have difficulty honouring existing contracts	Honouring contracts
We will have to restrict spending because of uncertainty	Restrict spending
The uncertainty about impacts will make business planning more challenging	Uncertainty

The biggest impact employers say they are facing because of the US tariffs is the uncertainty . . .

Chart 13: Impact of US tariffs



The biggest impact employers say they are facing because of the US tariffs is the uncertainty; combine that with the high level of uncertainty expressed in the answer to the question about technological and environmental changes, and it suggests that employers are living through very challenging times (and this only a couple of years after the pandemic). Other significant impacts are the need to restrict spending, the disruption of supply chains and having to raise prices.

When analyzed by size of firm, there are three patterns:

1) All size firms have much the same response:
   - Supply chain disruptions
   - Need to raise prices

2) The impact declines the larger the firm:
   - Uncertainty making planning more challenging
   - Need to restrict spending

3) Small firms (1-4 employees) are more likely to experience the impact:
   - Need to reduce hours, staff and/or operations
   - Need to delay growth or expansion plans

Seven out of ten (71%) of respondents neither use nor are considering using the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

Temporary Foreign Workers Program

Two questions were asked regarding the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. The first asked whether respondents were using the program. Table 15 shows the responses for all employers and by employee size categories.

Seven out of ten (71%) of respondents neither use nor are considering using the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. The tendency is that the larger the firm, the more likely they are using or considering using the program.

Next, respondents were asked their knowledge of certain recent changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

One can well imagine that those who do not use the program would be less aware of changes to the program. Table 16 compares the responses to this question, showing the results of those who were somewhat aware or aware, for all respondents, then two other categories:

1) Respondents who were not using and not considering using the program, as well as those who were unsure or didn't know if they used the program
2) Respondents who were using or considering using the program

Table 15: Usage of Temporary Foreign Worker Program

	ALL	1-4 employees	5-19 employees	20-99 employees	100+ employees
No, neither using nor considering using	71%	100%	77%	60%	63%
Considering using	4%	0%	7%	3%	3%
Yes, currently using	13%	0%	7%	26%	13%
Unsure/don't know	12%	0%	10%	11%	20%

Not surprisingly, there is a clear difference in knowledge about the program between those who use it and those who do not. That difference is on a smaller scale for those answering "somewhat aware," but it is considerable for those answering "aware," reflecting the clear certainty about the answer among those who use the program. That being said, even among those who use the program, usually only four out of ten were aware of the changes, except for one change, where six out of ten (63%) knew that they must pay foreign workers the posted prevailing wage for the occupation and location.

Table 16: Knowledge about recent changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program

	SOMEWHAT AWARE			AWARE		
	ALL	Not using or unsure	Using or considering	ALL	Not using or unsure	Using or considering
Most sectors now have a cap of 10% on the number of low-wage positions held by temporary foreign workers	16%	13%	21%	23%	16%	42%
Applications for low-wage positions in census metropolitan areas with an unemployment rate of 6% or higher will not be processed (with some exceptions)	9%	5%	21%	23%	16%	37%
Employers must pay foreign workers the posted prevailing wage for the occupation and location	13%	11%	16%	37%	26%	63%
The provincial threshold for what is considered a high-wage position was increased by 20% above the provincial median wage	13%	10%	16%	17%	10%	42%

Other comments from employers

Employers were invited at the end of the survey to provide additional comments relating to the topics covered by the survey or priorities related to their organization. Respondents had already been asked at the end of the section on mental health and wellness for additional comments, so that by this point, only 18 added something further, a third of which said they had no other comments.

Among the remaining, there were multiple comments on three issues:

- Two mentioned government policies toward businesses; one sought additional government support while another felt that increasing the minimum wage was making their business uncompetitive
- One said they had stopped using US suppliers because of the US tariffs and another had cancelled promotional trips to the United States and was looking for alternative suppliers
- Two felt that the Foreign Temporary Worker Program needed to be cut back to make more jobs available to youth and the under-employed

The remaining comments covered a wide range of topics: would like to see a salary survey for professional and blue-collar jobs; complex issues impacting workplaces require more collaborative efforts; dependency on AI will cripple people; the survey was too long.

One last comment: “I’m interested to see the results. How do we support employees in coping with so much change so that they can stay engaged, be supported and achieve results, while building their resilience skills and strategies?”

Follow-up interviews

As part of the survey process, a handful of respondents are approached for a short follow-up phone interview, so that the analysis of the survey data could benefit from additional qualitative insights.

The first topic probed with employers was whether the incidence of mental health and wellness concerns was increasing or whether it was a matter of more individuals feeling comfortable coming forward about their challenges. The responses suggested it was a mix of factors: for one, the overall work environment has gotten more stressful, with greater demands on people's time and the need to multi-task, greater concerns regarding job security, the impact of inflation on wages and one's ability to make ends meet, and the greater uncertainties caused by technological change and the impact of the US tariffs. For individuals working in the helping sectors, it feels like there is more demand for services while governments are constricting funding, resulting in more pressures on staff. Because everyone was affected by the pandemic, there has been a greater willingness to talk about feeling stressed or anxious, however, that has not quite penetrated all workplaces. Finally, there is a feeling that people appear less resilient, perhaps because of the accumulation of pressures, and so there may be need for more support in the workplace.

When asked about the level of importance attached to mental health and wellness in the workplace and whether that has changed, the majority felt that it had become a higher priority, especially since the pandemic, with a minority saying it has stayed about the same level. No one suggested that the level of importance attached to this issue had declined.

One of the insights arising from the survey was that there was correlation between employers who report more incidence of mental health and wellness issues in the workplace and rating mental health and wellness issues as a higher priority for their organization. On the basis of the data alone, one cannot assume that one causes the other, so employers were questioned about their views about the relationship between these two items. The tendency was for respondents to feel that employers who demonstrated a higher regard or concern regarding mental health and wellness issues in the workplace were likely to make employees feel more comfortable disclosing their challenges, thus increasing the reporting of incidences of mental health and wellness challenges. (Even with that permission, some employees may still feel inhibited disclosing, sometimes perhaps because their challenges are less related to the workplace and are more a matter arising in their personal life. It was a topic that generated a fair bit of reflection.)

Respondents added that these issues sometimes fly under the radar, as managers and supervisors are absorbed with the day-to-day pressures of operational issues. One commented that it would help organizations to be pro-active, through equipping staff with the tools and skills to adapt to change, as this is the environment we are now living in.

The issue of the incidence of mental health and wellness concerns is also tied up with the degree to which employees feel comfortable disclosing their issues . . .

Conclusion

The level of responses and the degree to which respondents dropped out of the survey at the first question on mental health and wellness issues suggest that the survey responses are skewed toward those respondents who feel mental health and wellness issues in the workplace are very important or a critical priority to their organization. Roughly three-quarters of respondents felt that to be the case.

It was useful to compare the responses of those who felt placed a high priority on these issues and those who felt it was of lower importance.

Two major findings of the survey are:

1) There is a correlation between the incidence of mental health and wellness concerns and the degree to which an employer places importance on issues related to mental health and wellness in their organization; a correlation does not mean one causes the other, but that responses to these two questions track in the same direction: high incidence and high importance go together

2) Most of the other responses about mental health and wellness also seem to have a relationship to this incidence and importance correlation; employers who have higher incidences of and place greater importance on mental health and wellness concerns:

   i. Report higher impacts on their organization on such issues as the need to adjust the employee benefit package, the number of short- and long-term leave requests, and the level of employee conflict or toxic behaviours, among others

   ii. Are more likely to report that the incidence of mental health and wellness concerns has been increasing

   iii. Are more likely to consult with staff or to track metrics regarding mental health and wellness issues

   iv. Are more likely to provide mental health days, an Employee Assistance Program or wellness apps or subscriptions

   v. Are more likely to feel very confident in their ability to support employees with mental health and wellness concerns

The issue of the incidence of mental health and wellness concerns is also tied up with the degree to which employees feel comfortable disclosing their issues, which creates its own challenge when it comes to identifying and addressing such concerns, as these may relate to overall messaging and the corporate culture of an organization, as well as the degree to which managers and supervisors are adept at recognizing and being approachable about mental health and wellness concerns.

Peel Halton Workforce Development Group

PEEL HALTON EMPLOYER SURVEY

2025

Mental Health and Wellness in the Workplace:

Does it Make a Difference to Think it is Important?

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