

## THE STATE OF WORKPLACE BURNOUT



## Burnout is rife. It is also preventable.

The last few years have seen enormous turbulence. Against a backdrop of global insecurities, we are facing highly challenging and uncertain times, both individually and collectively.

The constant and significant changes in our personal and work lives have accelerated the level of stress experienced by all of us. And through it all, we continue to work. Beyond macro-factors, the current workforce is faced with unprecedented levels of complexities and demands. At no point in history has work been more omnipresent and complex, and the environment more fast-paced. Anthropologist and futurist Jamais Cascio coined the term BANI to describe this climate: Brittle, Anxious, Non-Linear and Incomprehensible. This BANI climate compounds our stress to the point where it becomes chronic: low-level, insidious and ongoing.

## Organizations are beginning to realize that burnout is a clear and present threat.

Whilework can create a sense of purpose and community, it can also create and perpetuate chronic stress. When chronic workplace stress goes unmanaged, this stress evolves into a syndrome called burnout.

Workplace burnout has been studied for almost five decades. In recent years, the term 'burnout' has become a buzzword. And for all this attention, and countless corporate wellness initiatives, burnout continues to grow alarmingly.

### However, there is good news.

While burnout is rife, it is also preventable. The State of Burnout report provides longitudinal evidence of the growth and patterns of burnout and its connection with belonging, engagement and psychological safety. We gain insight into the impact of the recent shifts in how we work on burnout. And, we identify what leaders and organizations can do to prevent burnout starting now.

We envision a world without burnout, and workplaces where people can grow and thrive, not simply survive for a pay check. This report aims to provide you with the information, questions and inspiration you need to start taking action and join the growing burnout prevention movement.

#### **HOW TO USE THIS REPORT**

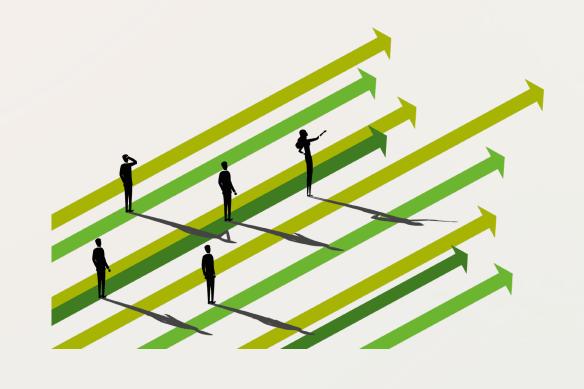
- 1. Use the information in this report to better understand the key causes of burnout and its effects on individuals and organizations.
- 2. Share this report with your team and other leaders in your organization to start courageous conversations about making burnout, mental health and wellbeing at work a strategic imperative.
- 3. Work with other leaders or within your own team to identify the key sources of chronic stress mentioned in this report in your team or organization. Experiment with solutions.

## Why We Need To Prevent Burnout: 4 Compelling Reasons





Burnout has a devastating impact on a person's physical, mental and emotional health. Preventing burnout will allow more people to avoid its debilitating symptoms and live happier, healthier lives.



## **SO ORGANIZATIONS THRIVE**

Burnout has a detrimental effect on productivity and quality of work. Preventing burnout means organizations can operate more effectively, have more impact and reach their goals faster.



## SO INNOVATION THRIVES

Experiencing burnout numbs our capacity to generate and nurture ideas. By taking active steps to prevent burnout, leaders create environments where great, game-changing ideas can be born, grow and flourish.



#### SO SOCIETIES THRIVE

Without burnout, people have the energy and mental space to be more engaged with their families, communities and broader society. A reduction in burnout would also have financial implications (e.g., lowers healthcare costs) that can be redirected to other societal issues.

## **Understanding Burnout**

The word 'burnout' is often used as a catchy way to describe a sense of disaffection or weariness. However, burnout is not a synonym for being tired, stressed or 'over' something. Burnout refers to an experience specific to work and should not be used to describe what a person might be experiencing in their personal life. We need to be precise about the term 'burnout' so we have a consistent definition and means of measuring this syndrome.

In 2019, the World Health Organization defined burnout as:

a syndrome... resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.

The WHO definition further outlines that burnout is characterized by 3 dimensions:



#### **EXHAUSTION**

Feelings of energy depletion or emotional, mental and physical exhaustion



#### **CYNICISM**

Mental distance, alienation, and feelings of negativity or cynicism



### **REDUCED PROFESSIONAL EFFICACY**

*Inability to produce work at* the same speed or quality is diminished

#### Burnout is caused by unmanaged chronic workplace stress.

That is, **Stress** 

→ which is **Chronic** — which occurs in the **Workplace** 

(a hormonal response in our bodies to a threat)

(low-level and ongoing (making it difficult to perceive)) (within the context of our work lives)

#### **FACTS ABOUT BURNOUT**

- Burnout is a syndrome, not a disease or an illness (which differentiates it from depression, for example).
- Burnout is not the fault of the individual-it is not a sign of weakness or incompetence.
- Burnout happens gradually. It can take months or years to develop.
- Burnout can happen to anyone, in any industry, at any level.

## Key Findings

Rate of Burnout continues to grow while wellbeing continues to fall

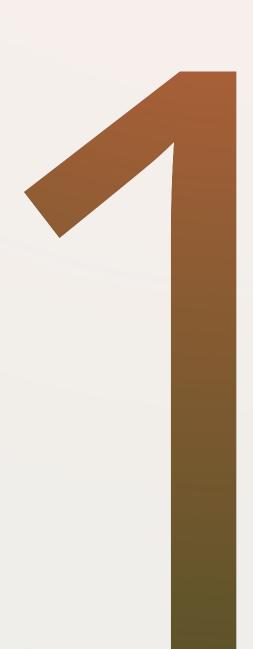
Lack of organizational support is a strong predictor of burnout

Burnout significantly affects productivity and quality of work

Burnout needs to be part of the hybrid work conversation

Organizations can create a competitive advantage by adapting people first policies

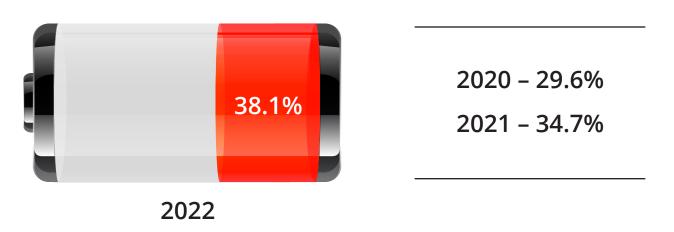
## Key Finding



## Rates of Burnout continues to grow.

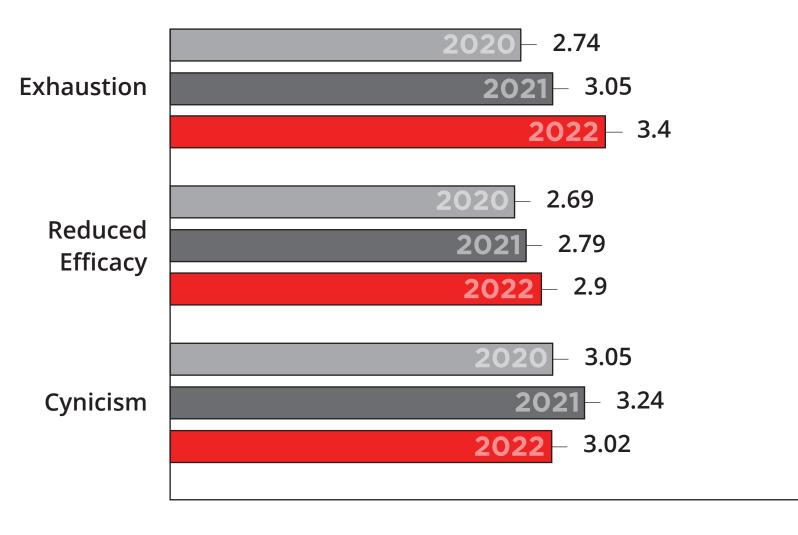
Workplace stress and rates of burnout is continuing to hit new record levels. With new ways of working and mindsets slow to adapt, burnout is continuing to grow. Over 38% of participants in the 2022 study are experiencing all three dimensions of burnout. It's not surprising, in this environment, that individual wellbeing continues to fall.

#### **BURNOUT RATES**



Burnout is measured by an individual reporting high levels of ALL 3 dimensions of burnout.

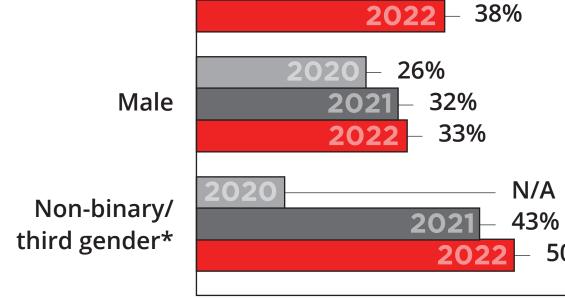
#### **BURNOUT DIMENSIONS\***



\* Measured on a 5-point scale. Average scores reported.

## Demographic Trends in Burnout

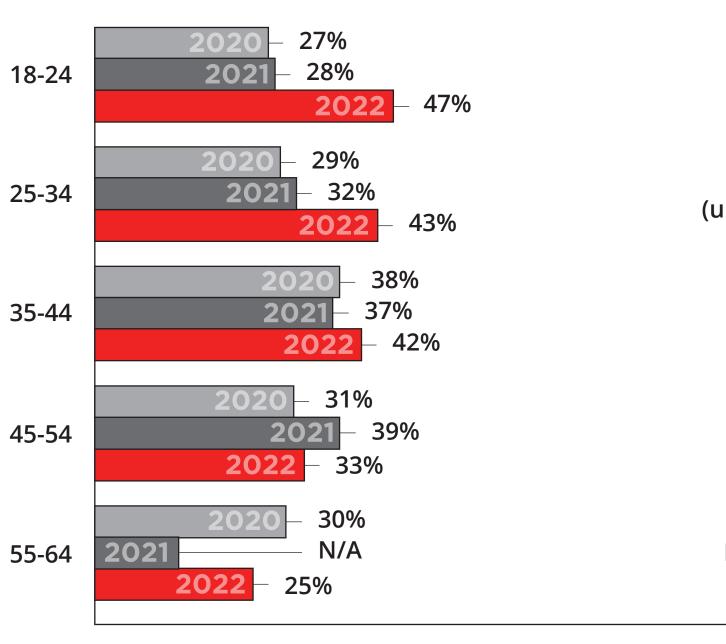
**AGE** 

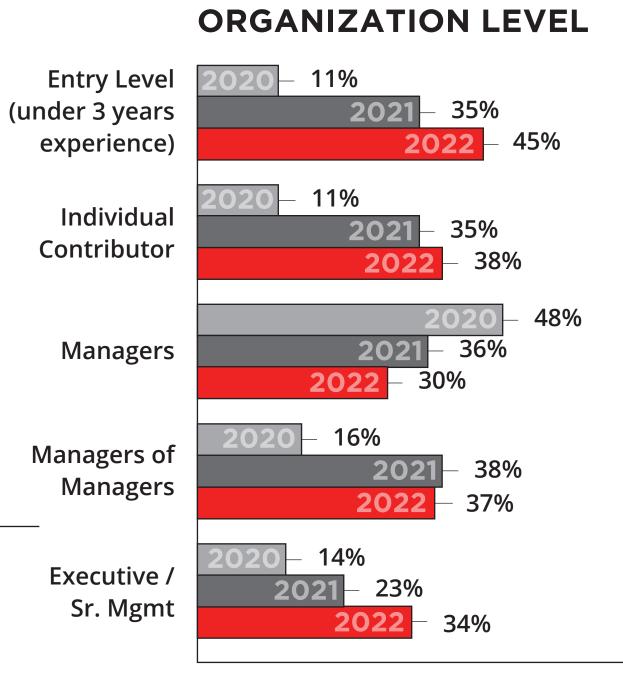


**GENDER** 

**Female** 

32%







There are differences between demographic groups and the rates of burnout. However, there are several factors with no difference in the occurrence of burnout.

- People managers experience burnout at the same level as nonpeople managers.
- Those who have caring responsibilities at home (e.g. children, elderly parents) experience burnout at the same rate as those who do not.

\* N <50

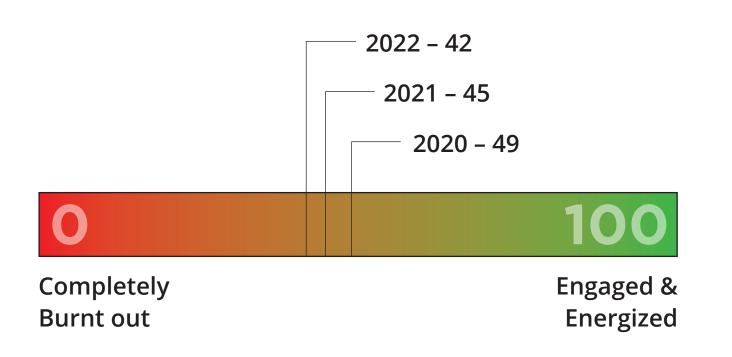
## Wellbeing continues to fall

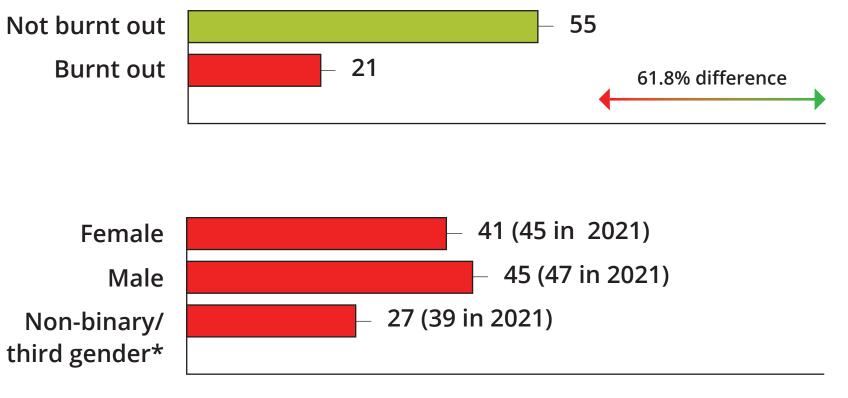
Wellbeing can be defined as the overall physical, mental, emotional and economic wellbeing of a person or group. At the same time as burnout continues to climb, the level of overall wellbeing respondents reported in the 2022 study has fallen.

The gap between the wellbeing of those experiencing burnout and those who are not is dangerously wide. Women and men saw a drop in overall wellbeing from last year, and participants who identified as non-binary third gender reported a significantly lower level of wellbeing.

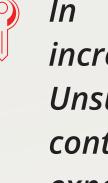
#### **OVERALL WELLBEING**

'Please rate your overall wellbeing on a scale of 0 to 100 with 0 being completely exhausted and burnt out to 100 being completely engaged and energized.'





### **KEY TAKEAWAY**



In 2022, burnout continues to increase across every demographic. Unsurprisingly, overall wellbeing continues to fall. Women are still experiencing higher levels of burnout than men, as in previous years, while other demographic factors have shifted. The age most impacted by burnout has shifted to the 18-24 group and those in entry level roles (less than 3 years). This is concerning: burnout is being felt by those younger and earlier in their career.



Leaders must proactively identify and redesign ways of working that put the wellbeing of their people first and prevent burnout - understanding that this creates a powerful competitive advantage and drives *long-term growth.* 

\* N <50

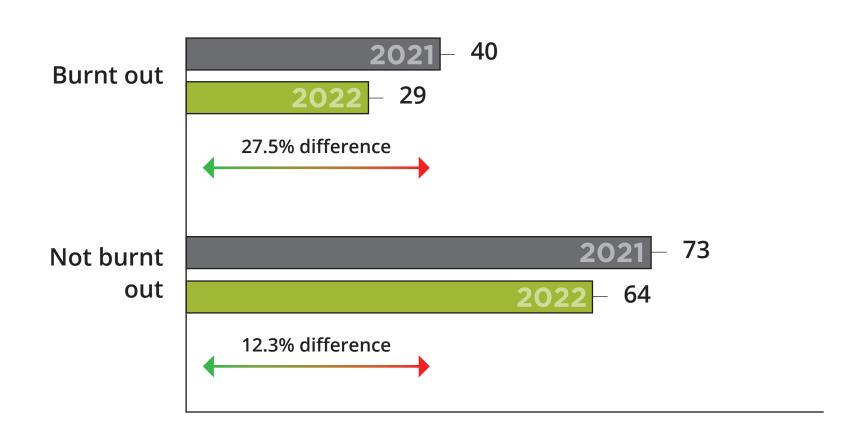
## Key Finding



## Organizational support prevents burnout.

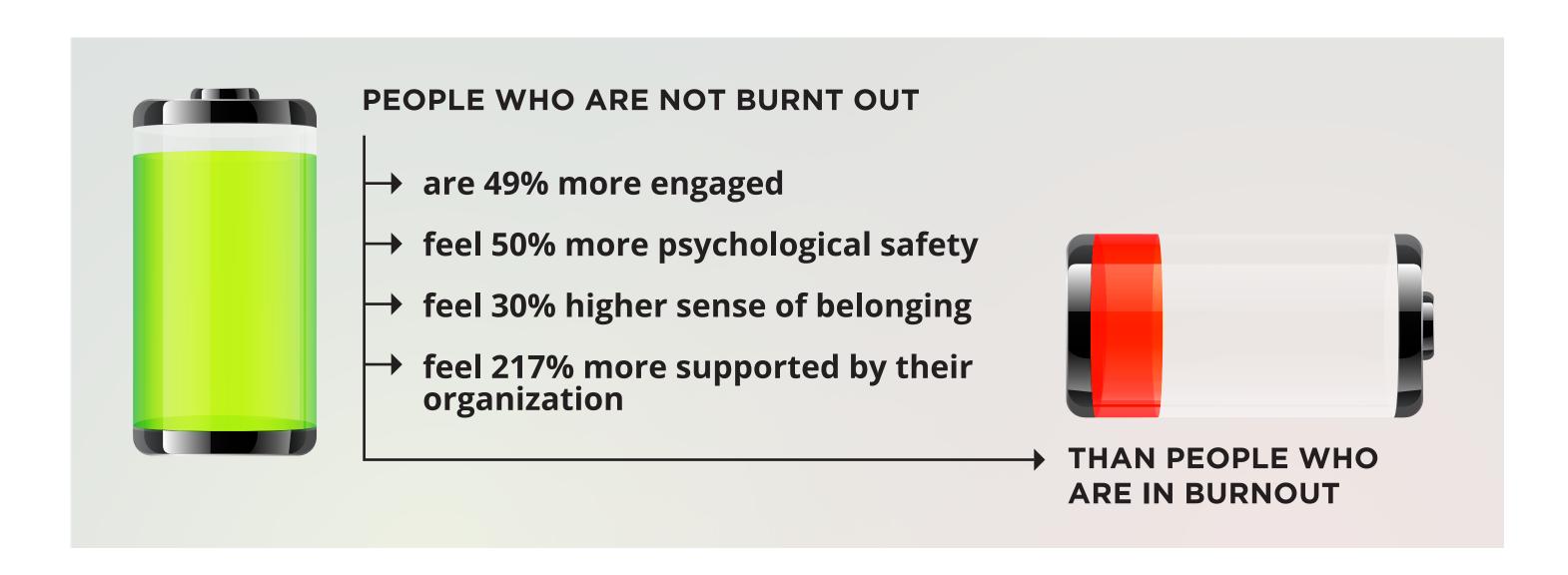
Fostering an environment of psychological safety, belonging, and ensuring strong employee engagement are types of organizational support that are essential to tackling burnout. These types of support ensure people believe that their organization values their contributions, cares about their wellbeing and fulfills their socioemotional needs.

#### **ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT**



The data show a drop in how well people felt supported by their organizational from 2021 to 2022. This suggests that as leaders and organizations begin the transition to the 'new normal', they are not meeting the needs of their people.

## The Impact of Organizational Support on Burnout



The 2022 data show that organizational support factors such as engagement, psychological safety and belonging have a **high**, **negative correlation** to burnout.

The impact of **engagement**, **psychological safety**, **belonging and wellbeing** – and their ability to potentially prevent burnout – is remarkable. People have a clear need for certain psychosocial needs to be met in the workplace. Leaders must ensure people feel valued and acknowledged, have contributions

recognized and encouraged, and feel connected to each other and to something greater than themselves as a result of their work.

Leaders must take all possible steps to foster these components of organizational support in their teams and among each other for any burnout prevention initiative to have impact. Such steps include building skills of empathy, bias awareness, demonstrating vulnerability, and leading by example.

#### **KEY TAKEAWAY**

- When leaders foster organizational support by creating and nurturing a climate of psychological safety, engagement and belonging, this significantly reduces the likelihood of burnout.
- These measures alone will not extinguish burnout: poor work habits, processes and systems are powerful contributors, too. However, organizational support in the form of psychological safety, engagement and belonging are essential to creating the possibility of a workplace without burnout.

## Key Finding



# Burnout significantly affects productivity and quality of work.

People are the main drivers of organizational success and the health of the people in the organization is a key determinant on productivity and quality of work. There is a major gap in the productivity and quality of work between those who are burnt out and those who are not.

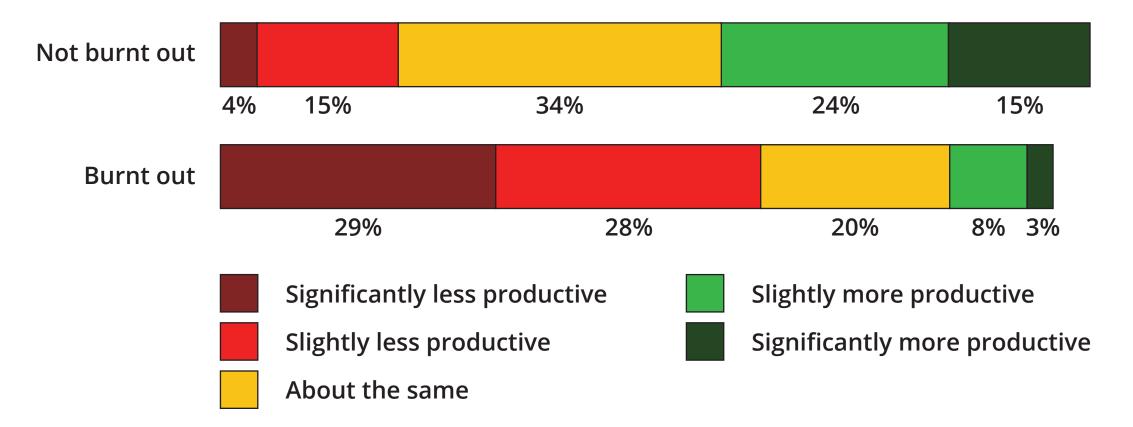
#### **NOT BURNT OUT**

- 39% reported being more productive
- 43% reported producing higher quality of work

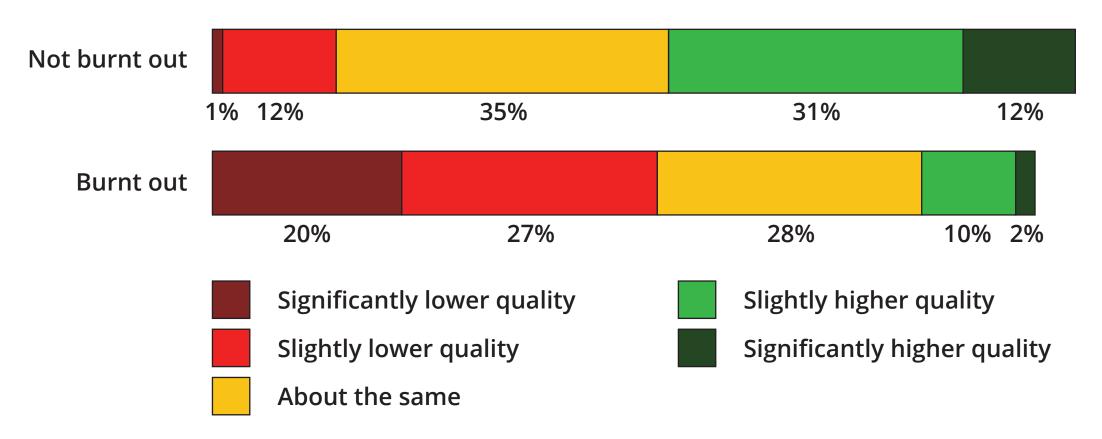
#### **BURNT OUT**

- 57% reported being less productive in the past 12 months
- 47% reported producing lower quality of work

#### **PRODUCTIVITY IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS**



#### **QUALITY OF WORK IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS**



Consistent with the last two years, the 2022 study found that those experiencing burnout indicated significantly lower levels of productivity and quality of work than those not experiencing burnout. In burnout, people tend to feel drained, overwhelmed or emotionally exhausted, develop feelings of withdrawal or cynicism towards their work, and struggle to concentrate or be creative. If organizations and leaders want to improve productivity and get the best work from their people, they must focus on burnout prevention as the key to unlocking the potential of their people.

#### **KEY TAKEAWAY**

- Organizations must consider burnout mitigation in any discussions about improving productivity or quality of work (i.e., innovation).
- While some leaders may push their people to the limit for short-term increases in productivity with average quality outputs at best, leaders who focus on burnout prevention by embedding healthy work practices will see long-term productivity and higher quality of work.

## **Key Finding**



## Burnout needs to be part of the hybrid work conversation.

Leaders haven't figured out how to make flexibility work well. There is a big opportunity for leaders to reimagine how and where work is best produced while balanced with the flexibility craved by their people.

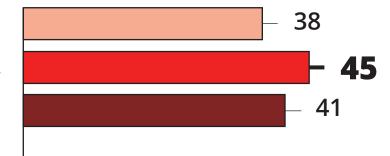
#### **WELLBEING IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS**

0 (Burnt Out) -100 (Engaged and Energized)

Working from home over 80% of the time

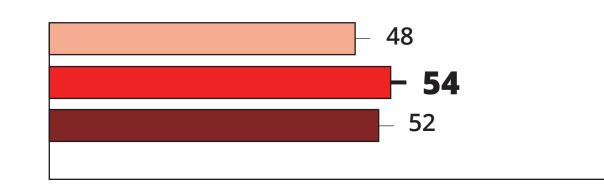
Working between home and office 2-3 days a week

Working from the office/worksite over 80% of the time



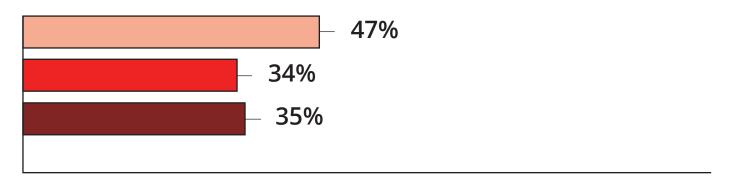
#### ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

0 (Not supported at all) – 100 (Fully Supported)



#### PERCENTAGE FEELING BURNT OUT BY WORK LOCATION

Working from home over 80% of the time Working between home and office 2-3 days a week Working from the office/store over 80% of the time



The Hybrid work environment is here to stay. There is a big opportunity for leaders to reimagine how to define productivity, where work happens, and how to better set work-life boundaries. Fostering a healthier and higher

performing culture will take imagination and consistent iterations. Ways to improve wellbeing, balance, and, as a result, engagement and performance, are to include employees in designing better approaches.

## Leaders need to reconsider how to best support employees who work mostly or wholly out of the traditional office.

People who spend 2-3 days a week in the office feels the most supported by their organization and report the highest levels of wellbeing. Having some physical connection to the organization gives people the feeling of comfort and support. While working from home provides high levels of flexibility, this year's data shows that those working mostly from home have the highest rates of burnout. This challenge needs to be considered in any hybrid work conversation.

Leaders need to extinguish any notion that presenteeism equals value creation. However, leaders also need to promote the value of bringing people together to create bonds that can't be easily replicated through online interactions. To create a healthier and higher performing culture, leaders must redefine standards of work for the office (e.g., collaboration and building relationship capital) and home (e.g., focused work).

#### **KEY TAKEAWAY**



Leaders must set new standards of what good looks like when it comes to where and what work is done.

Leaders need to eradicate outdated indicators of value creation (e.g., number of hours in the office or "online") if they are going to attract, develop, and retain great people.



While more flexible to the individual, working mostly from home has major drawbacks. Consider forming cross-functional and multi-level (e.g., front line and mid-level employees) workgroups to come up with ways to change organizational norms and ways of support – regardless of location.

## **Key Finding**



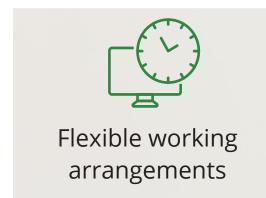
# Leaders can create a competitive advantage by adopting people-first policies.

Most organizations around the world have struggled with retaining and attracting employees in the past 12 months. The 'Great Resignation' has shifted the power dynamic as employees re-evaluated priorities and are acting on their newfound priorities – namely, health and wellbeing matters more than work.

According to research\*, 43% of employees are somewhat or extremely likely to consider changing jobs in the coming year. In our study, we sought to understand the factors that cause people to stay where they are – or move to another organization. This is how participants responded.

In this year's study, we asked participants why they are staying with their current organization and what would make them move to a new organization. These are the top 5 responses to each question.

#### **RETENTION: WHY I'M STAYING**





Fair and equitable pay and benefits



Supportive Alignment with my colleagues personal values



Fulfilling work

Here, burnout has no bearing: those experiencing burnout and those who are not had the same reasons for staying with their current organization. The age group experiencing the highest levels of burnout (18-24) did identify different reasons for staying. They rated 'development opportunities' and 'strong support and recognition from their managers' as top factors for staying. While 'fulfilling work' and 'alignment with my personal values' was among the top 5 reasons for every other age group, this did not seem to be front of mind for those between 18 and 24.

#### ATTRACTION: WHY I'M JOINING







Flexible working arrangements



Better work-life balance

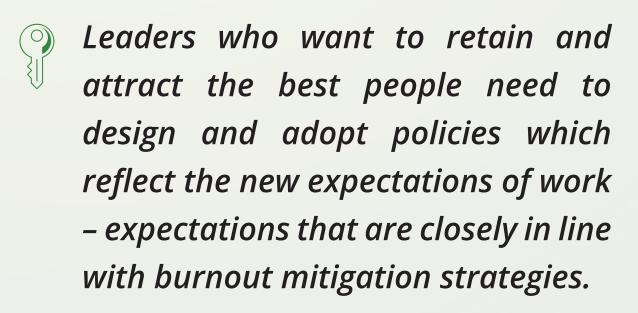


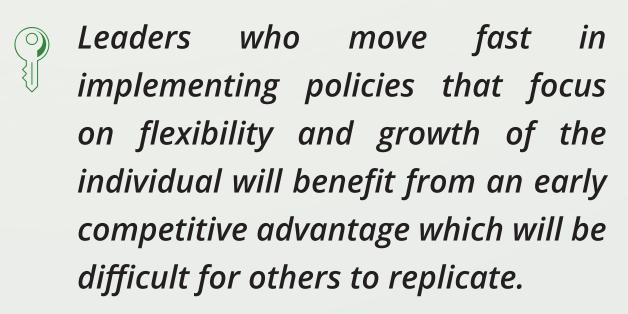


Increased compensation is the top reason that people would consider joining a different organization across all demographics (i.e., gender, age group, burnt out/not). This is a major shift from previous research on attraction/retention of employees which has consistently shown that compensation is rarely the main reason for someone switching organizations.

Another stand-out difference: those who are not burnt out identified 'more advancement opportunities (e.g., promotions)' as their top reason for changing organizations. While those suffering from burnout are looking simply to survive, those who are not are looking to the future and taking on more.

### **KEY TAKEAWAY**





## Recommendations for Leaders

- **Ensure your people, especially those in entry/junior roles are properly compensated** the top stressors experienced by people are caused by financial insecurities brought on by high inflation and stagnant wages.
- Have open and honest conversations about stressors within the organization be prepared to eradicate outdated indicators of value creation, such as number of hours or days in the office, or when a person is "online".
- **Embrace organizational factors to combat burnout** focus on creating an environment that fosters psychological safety, organizational support and belonging to combat burnout.
- Review how performance is evaluated and rewarded modernize the way organizations evaluate work from rewarding busy low value work to high quality high value work.
- **Express care for individuals as people, not a resource** show them their wellbeing and personhood matters and is a priority over work. Make it clear they matter and are valued at work.

## Imagining a workplace without burnout

Burnout continues to grow at an alarming rate. However, burnout is not an inevitable consequence of working. People created these ways of working and work cultures. As such, we can also reimagine and reengineer these structures and cultures to work for people, not against. No organization can function without people and no person can function while in burnout. Creating an environment so people can thrive is not only doing the right thing, but it's also good for business, innovation and society.

If carefully implemented, burnout prevention tactics (such as those set out in the appendix) have the potential to lift people into a healthier, engaged, and energized work life. In turn, this supports greater success for teams and organizations. The key is to start the conversation, and act. Today.

Preventing burnout will be the most significant factor that determines if an organization survives or thrives in the coming decade.

Ensuring leaders prioritize burnout prevention will depend on the actions of courageous voices like yours. It requires advocates to provide a vision and a voice so strong that it overwhelms the powerful forces who seek to maintain the status quo. We encourage you to be that voice, and join us in the movement leading individuals, businesses and societies into a world without burnout.

Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.

Harriet Tubman







## Appendices

Causes and Preventative Solutions to Burnout

The State of Workplace Burnout 2023 Study Details

## **Appendix 1:**

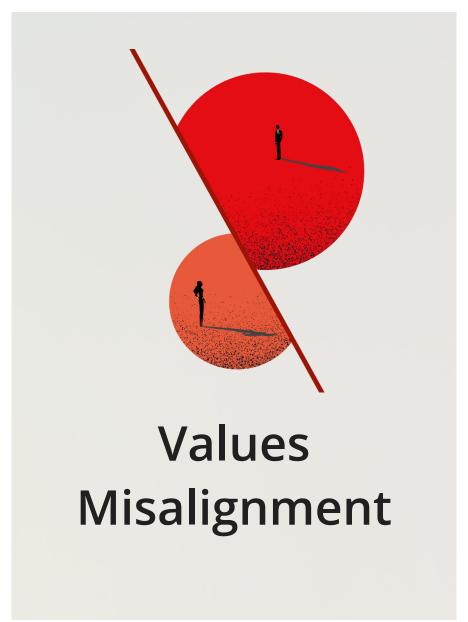
## Causes and Preventative Solutions to Burnout

What causes the chronic workplace stress that leads to burnout?

We have identified 5 key factors:











### CAUSE 1:

## Unmanageable workload

- Having too much to do can look different from one person or team to the next. For one, it might be long hours, for another, too many meetings or administrative tasks, for another, a lack of guidance on a complex or unfamiliar task.
- When work feels burdensome and endless, even high-performing people can shift from engaged to hopeless. This can happen imperceptibly over a period of time or all of a sudden.



## When leaders...

...Design jobs to be manageable in terms of workload, including sufficient time for learning and development, meetings, administrative tasks, and all other responsibilities,

...Are clear about the team's capacity by checking in regularly during one-on-one meetings,

....Push back on stakeholders where necessary to ensure team workload is manageable and foster realistic expectations,

...Watch for signs that workload is unmanageable – e.g., excessive after-hours correspondence, deadlines being consistently missed, irritability or sudden changes in mood or behavior,

...Seek honest feedback from third parties such as clients, other departments and peers (people won't always tell their manager how they're feeling in terms of time pressure and may feel the need to say they're okay in order not to seem unreliable),

## ...this leads to a Sustainable Workload.



## CAUSE 2:



- Organizations often push the responsibility of mitigating burnout to the individual, rather than examining the structures and cultures that are increasing the likelihood of burnout.
- Leaders often don't follow through or continue support/policies to shift culture. This leaves people feeling unsupported and if leaders demonstrate hypocrisy, inconsistency or self-serving behavior resentful and cynical.

## When leaders...

...Develop policies that put the employee's wellbeing first, above performance metrics, and adjust expectations when circumstances dictate,

...Evaluate and redesign outdated processes – experiment with different ways of working and study failure with curiosity, not blame,

... Are recognized and rewarded for fostering and prioritizing wellbeing in their teams,

... Create an environment where employees have more control over their work and have the support to push back on unreasonable demands.

... Prioritize developing manager skills in coaching, listening, and communication,



## CAUSE 3:

## Values Misalignment

- People want more than a job.
   People are craving purpose both in their lives and in their work.
- Values statements needs to be more than a poster in the office. Leaders need to demonstrate how their people's contributions are making a difference for the organization, their clients, or even for the world.



## When leaders...

...Ask for and listen to what matters to their people and how that is connected to the values,

...Make a concerted effort to regularly discuss and demonstrate the values (e.g., through storytelling) and embed values in policies and practices,

...Explicitly connect the organization's mission with people's work,

...Involve their people in the articulation of values in how these translate into operating principles, to ensure engagement and buy-in,

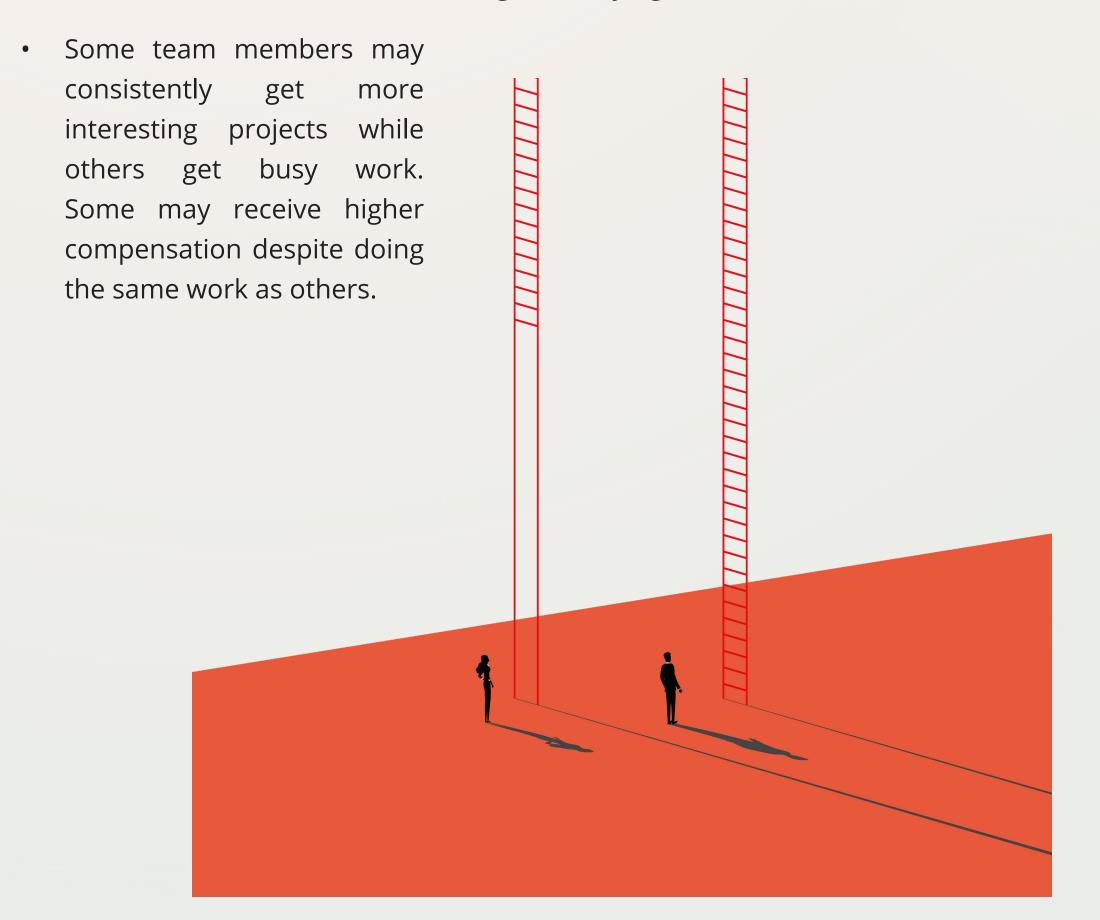
...this leads to Values Alignment.



## CAUSE 4:

## **Unfair/Inequitable Treatment**

• Unfair/inequitable treatment can show up in different ways, including bias, favoritism and mistreatment through to bullying and abuse.



## When leaders...

...Build clear, transparent and easily accessible policies so people know where to go for support if incidents of unfairness or inequitable treatment arise,

...Actively work to uncover and become aware of their own biases through ongoing training.

...Understand that good intentions are not enough, seek feedback on how their behavior is received by others and consistently coursecorrect where necessary,

...Build and refine coaching skills. Focus particularly on building compassionate empathy through active listening and asking open questions with the aim of understanding the perspective of the other,



...this leads to Equitable and Inclusive Treatment.

## **Toxic Leadership Behaviors**

 Leaders can be central to preventing burnout or they can exacerbate the problem.

 Absent or contemptuous leadership creates a toxic work environment through clinging on to outdated modalities or work, role model unhealthy behaviors, and create a climate of inconsistency that leaves people feeling isolated, exploited, and stuck in survival mode.



## When leaders...

...Prioritize the health and wellbeing of their people above performance metrics,

...Work to create an environment of support that includes psychological safety, belonging, and engagement,

...Regularly review and adapt to new ways of working to facilitate improvements in inefficiencies and manageable workloads,

...Lead the conversation on burnout and radiate authenticity through sharing own experiences dealing with stress,

...Understand that their people are not a resource to be exploited, but one to nurture,



## **Appendix 2:**

## The State of Workplace Burnout 2023 Study Details

This study continues the longitudinal research into establishing trends and patterns that expands our understanding of burnout. This year focused on establishing the relationship between the prevalence of burnout and organizational factors such as engagement and psychological safety. The study also explored the relationship between burnout and the hybrid workplace.

We know people are burnt out. We understand why it's happening. Now, we want to establish how to prevent it.

## **STUDY DETAILS**



Available in 4 languages – English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese (traditional)



Average survey completion time – 6 minutes



Data collection via social media and directly with corporate and non-profit organizations

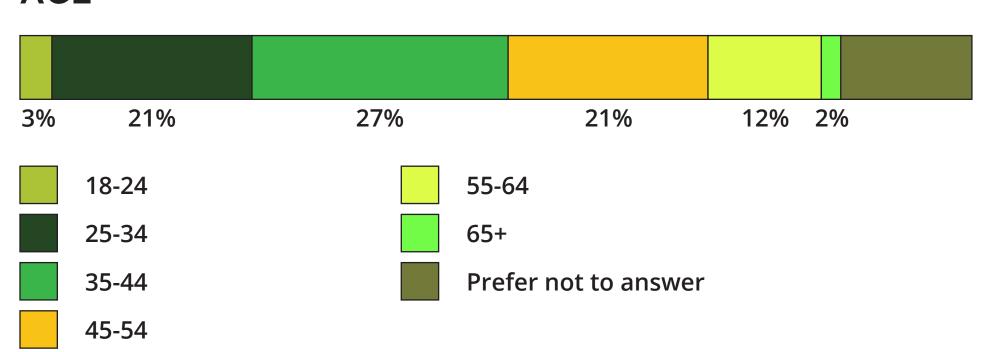
## Demographics

## 40 Countries | 2065 Participants

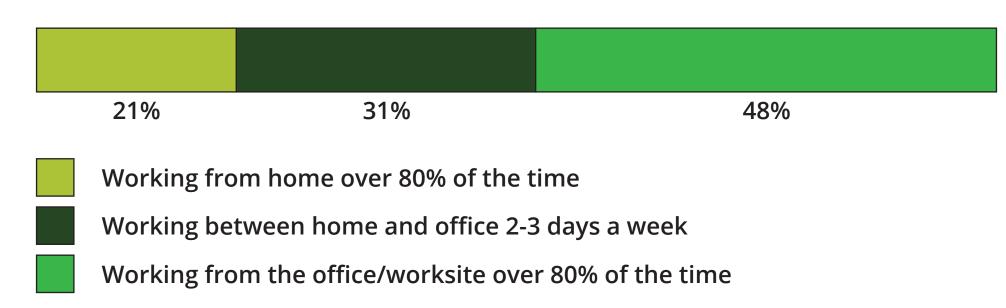
#### **GENDER**



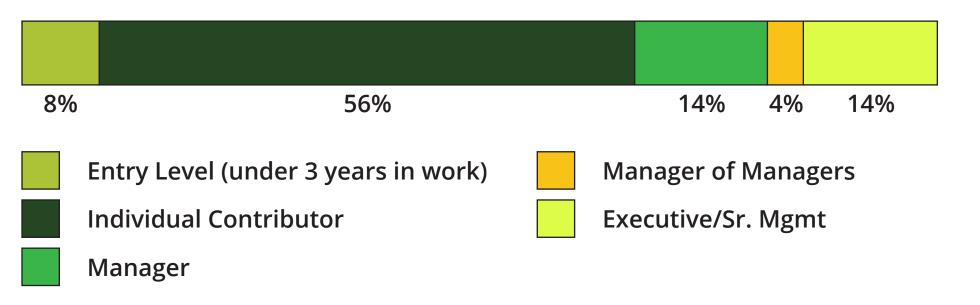
#### **AGE**



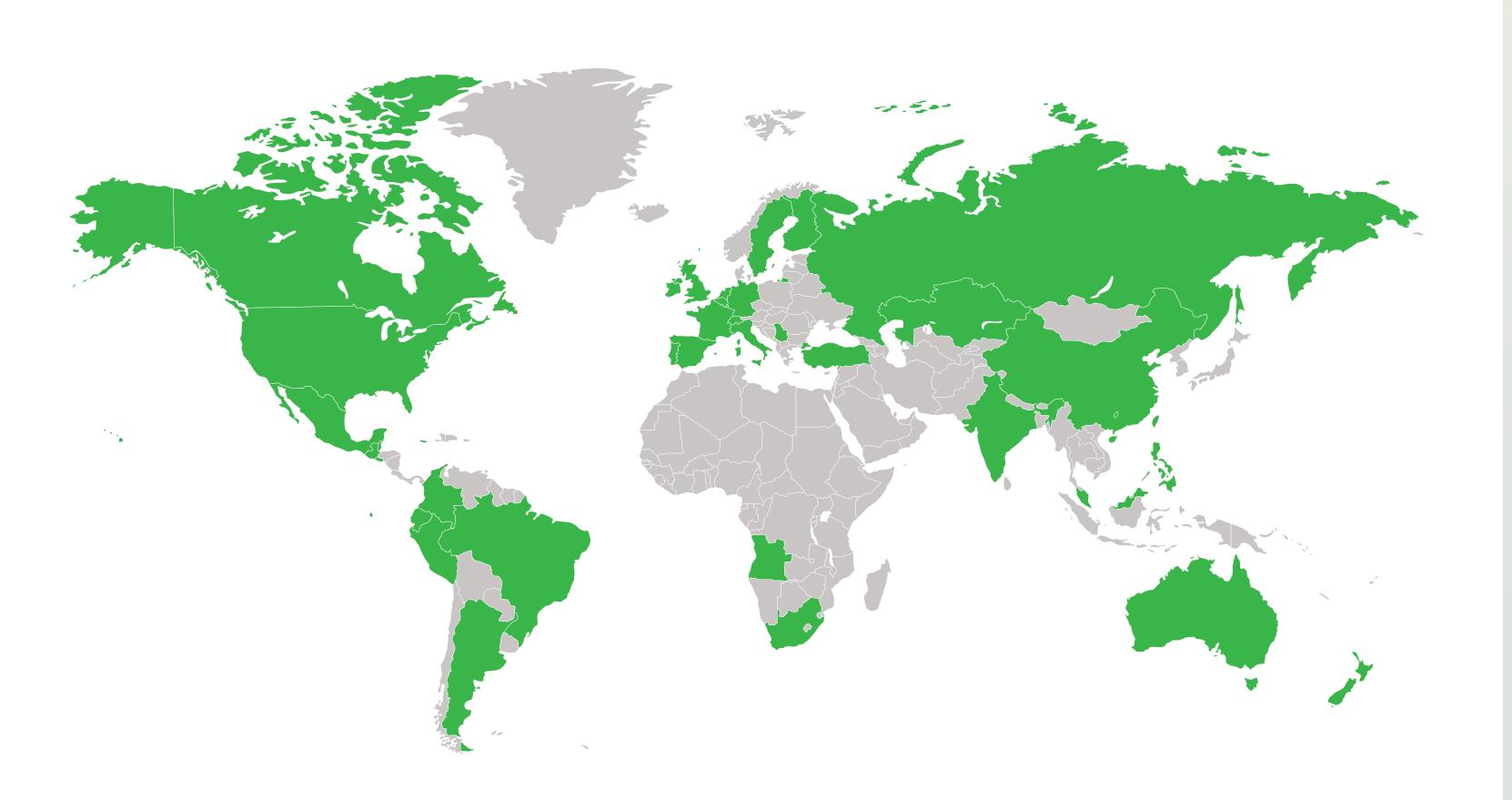
#### **WORK LOCATION**



#### **JOB LEVEL**



#### RESPONDENT COUNTRIES



Angola Luxembourg

Argentina Malaysia Mexico Australia

Belgium Netherlands Belize **New Zealand** 

Brazil Peru

Philippines Canada

China Portugal Colombia Russia

Serbia and Cuba Montenegro Ecuador

Singapore El Salvador

South Africa **Finland** 

Spain France Sweden Germany Switzerland

Grenada Taiwan

Guatamala Turkey India

**United Kingdom** Ireland **United States of** Italy

America

Kazakhstan

## About the Researchers

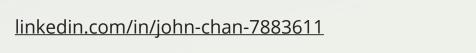
Dr. John Chan is the managing director of Infinite Potential. An Industrial/ Organisational psychologist with 20+ years of global experience designing people strategies to transform work into a place that empowers individuals to realize their whole potential. John's career has taken him from Silicon Valley startups to NYSE and ASX-100 companies. John publishes in academic and media publications and regularly speaks at national and international conferences.

and burnout expert who works with clients around the globe. She is Co-Director at Human Leaders, a movement of leaders making work a place where people, business and society can thrive. Her latest book, 'Relight Your Spark', guides individuals on how to heal and evolve after burnout.

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people want to do good work, achieve,

grow, and be part of something bigger

than themselves. For over 25 years, he

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transformation, leadership, and building

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do their best every day. Andrew is an

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and organizational talent and potential



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Amanda Cebrian is a data-driven organizational psychologist living between Australia and Europe with more than fifteen years of experience in People and Culture across different industries like software, finances, engineering and education. Amanda is passionate about building workplaces that empower individuals and teams to perform at their highest.



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Infinite Potential (IP) is an independent think tank that partners with leaders in business and society to provide solutions to complex issues through robust research and analysis. IP works closely with organisations in multiple domains to embrace a collaborative and holistic approach in transforming business strategies to capture the greatest opportunities.

The diversity in our partners brings deep industry and domain expertise, enabling us to dive beneath the surface and tackle the underlying issues and structures creating problems for organisations today.

This uniquely collaborative model allows our research and advice to question the status quo and spark changes that have a lasting effect.

Across all our work, the same goals drive what we do to help organisations maximise the potential of their people, create space for innovation, and support leaders with the courage to tackle complex issues.

#### CONNECT WITH INFINITE POTENTIAL

We may not have all the answers, but we know how to find them. Infinite Potential combines decades of experience with today's latest science, methodology and analytics to find solutions that empower leaders with transformative advice and insights.

Learn more at infinite-potential.com.au