

“Just talk to me”: What *really* matters for employees' wellbeing



Great Place to Work[®] – the Global Authority on Workplace Culture

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At the heart of what we do is gathering anonymous, authentic employee sentiment on whether a company is a genuinely 'great place to work'. Each year, we survey over 10,000 organisations around the world in over 90 countries and 92 languages. The comparable data in this report is UK-centric and gathers insights from those companies who have succeeded in making their employees experience high levels of wellbeing across their workplace.

Our mission is to build a better world by helping organisations become great workplaces For All™ – meaning every individual, regardless of who they are or what they do for the business. We work with and support organisations at varying stages of their journey.

If you wish to gather insights, take action and earn recognition for being a great place to work, please get in touch for more information.



SCAN ME

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FOREWORD

In 2022, post-pandemic life took a turn in more ways than one. We witnessed social, political and military unrest around the globe while struggling with our own turmoil at home – from widespread strikes and soaring costs of living, to the most extreme heat waves and cold spells in memory, and, of course, a bittersweet return to a kingdom.

Whilst trying to make sense of the turbulent world around us, UK employers also grappled with the Great Resignation and anxiety over quiet quitting, all while navigating the endlessly complex landscape of hybrid working.

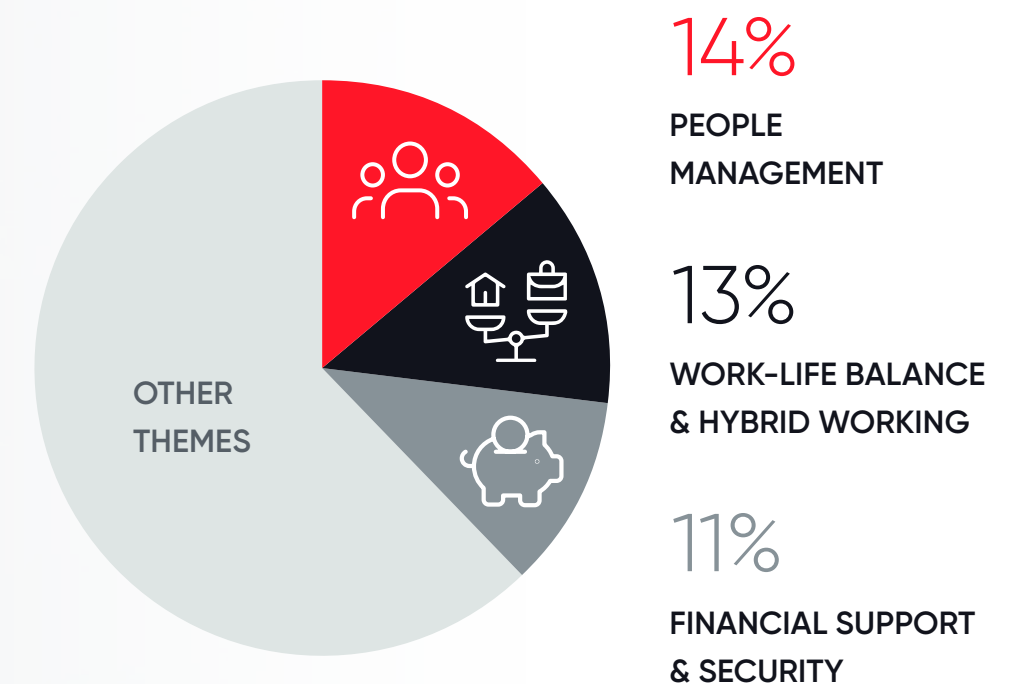
Despite these trials, however, there are those organisations who were able to find silver linings. They effectively stepped up their game to offer a safe and supportive community for their people; providing tailored support for internal and external challenges.

Which brings us to the UK's Best Workplaces for Wellbeing™ 2023, who consistently place employee wellbeing at the heart of their workplace culture.

Our team of Great Place To Work® culture experts analysed over 140,000 employee survey responses to assess the extent to which employees believe their workplace has taken the fundamental aspects of wellbeing seriously – even amidst uncertainty.

So, what matters most to the UK's workforce and their day-to-day wellbeing?

In this report, we share the 3 most widely cited themes in our qualitative analysis of thousands of anonymous employee comments¹ – namely, People Management (page 4-6), Work-Life Balance & Hybrid Working (page 7-8), and Financial Support & Security (page 9-10) – and uncover what differentiates the top 5 ranked companies from their peers.



¹ Theming analysis of open-ended comments to the question: "What is the single most valuable way for your organisation to support your personal wellbeing?"



People Management

As the corporate wellness industry continues to expand, many businesses have introduced impressive offerings around mental, physical and financial health.

But while these can be valuable contributions to good employee health and wellbeing, the single most desirable action of an organisation noted by our survey respondents is much simpler.

Above any perk, programme or policy, employees across industries, organisational structures, and cultures just want their managers to reach out and ask how they are.

Ideally, these manager-to-direct report touchpoints would happen fortnightly or monthly as a minimum, and cover both job-related and personal ground.

It's not complex or costly, yet can so easily be overlooked.

Some leaders may assume employees don't want to talk about their lives outside of work (or that this lies outside of line managers' responsibilities). But often a personal angle is exactly what matters most to people, especially in challenging or stressful times.

Best Workplaces for Wellbeing™ are certainly getting it right:

95%

of employees within the top 5 ranked companies say they get empathy and support from their managers when needed.

It's not rocket science. As long as people managers have the required interpersonal skills, and a *genuine* interest in their people, employees will feel supported and cared for – which enhances the experience of wellbeing, and in turn productivity, retention and brand advocacy.

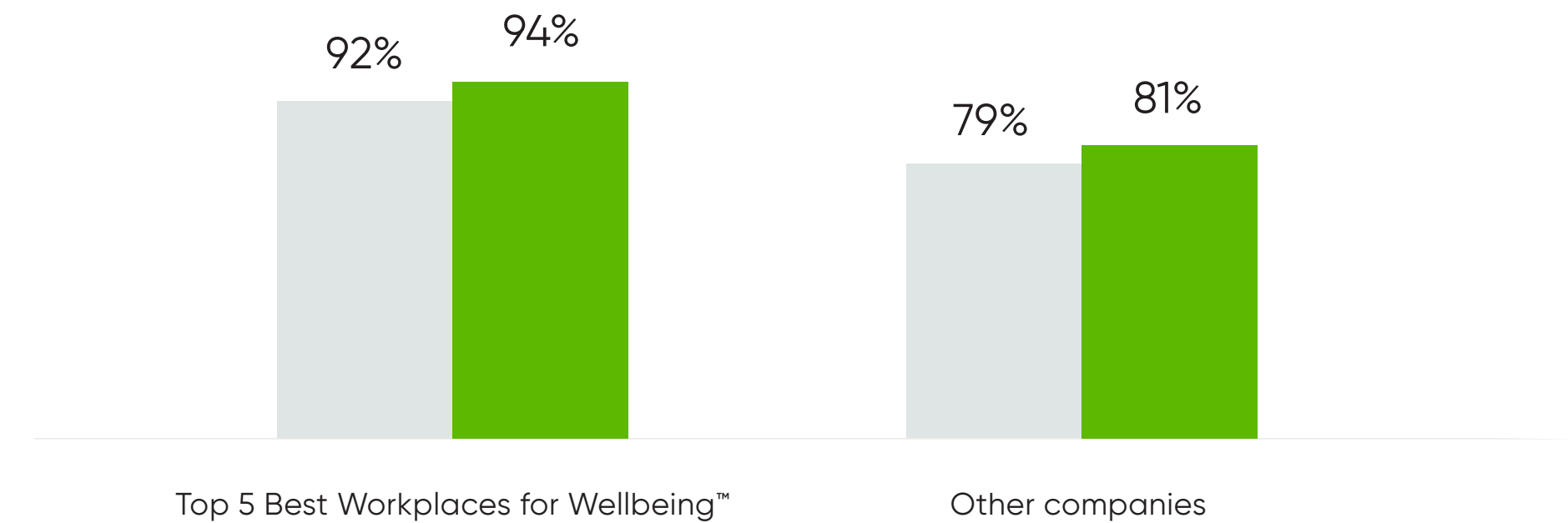
EMPLOYEE COMMENT

“Continue to bring conversations about wellbeing into common language. Continue to discourage those who model stress and overworking as the norm.”

INSIGHTS FROM GREAT PLACE TO WORK'S TRUST INDEX™ SURVEY

“Management shows a sincere interest in me as a person, not just an employee.”

■ 2022 ■ 2023



BEST PRACTICES FROM THE BEST WORKPLACES FOR WELLBEING™

Best Workplaces recognise that effective people management relies on regular and consistent touchpoints. At **Version 1**, managers are advised to schedule at least three 1-2-1 catch-ups with their employees per quarter. This is supported by training managers to have open conversations, connect with their employees on a deeper level and promote a trusting relationship.



CATEGORY: SUPER LARGE, RANK 4



EMPLOYEE COMMENT

"I'd love it if my managers ACTUALLY listened instead of pretending to."

EMPLOYEE COMMENT

"I feel having bi-weekly 1-2-1s really allows employees to feel as though they can openly discuss any challenges they face, personally or professionally, with their manager. Going forwards I think it'd be great if we could hold more regular 121 catch ups with members of our team who we don't work with on a day-to-day basis."

BEST PRACTICES FROM THE BEST WORKPLACES FOR WELLBEING™

To strengthen wellbeing support, **Student Beans** launched training and education for managers around mental health awareness and setting up wellness action plans for employees. This was supported by the charity MIND, which provided the company with the training material.



CATEGORY: LARGE, RANK 12



But who's supporting people managers?

Line managers are undoubtedly in a unique and important position of power – and therefore responsibility – when it comes to their direct reports' wellbeing. But the lesser talked-about angle is that line managers themselves are employees, as are (often) their managers.

So who's checking in on their wellbeing? And how can we ensure the pressure of supporting other individuals doesn't become a detriment in itself?

The answer may lie largely in ensuring relevant people management skills training, as well

as good peer support networks between managers for sharing best practice and offering social-emotional support. As one manager shared with us in their anonymous survey:

"We as front-line management are expected to deal with mental health issues often while dealing with your own. This should be dealt with by a specialist team with the correct training as I would personally hate to be left in a position where something happened to a member of my team through me doing what I thought was right at the time."

BEST PRACTICES FROM THE BEST WORKPLACES FOR WELLBEING™

A big part of supporting leadership with effective people management is to connect managers with one another. **Salesforce** has created a Leader Success Slack Channel, where managers can ask questions, collaborate, connect and share best practice in how to support their employees. This is a safe space for managers to develop their managerial skills and support one another.



CATEGORY: SUPER LARGE, RANK 3

EMPLOYEE COMMENT

"Supportive managers really make a difference when team members are going through a hard time in their personal life, like as personal situations happen in life which can put you on a high or low. With the right understanding and support through the hard times, truly make a difference to bringing you back up and allowing you to breathe. As an employee, you thrive to do your best when you feel valued and supported."

EMPLOYEE COMMENT

"Trust in line manager so we can talk on a regular basis and an interest from them in what is said – over the last year this hasn't happened and led to me demotivated and unhappy. My manager [had] no management experience or interest in me as a person or personal development."

Work-Life Balance & Hybrid Working

As in our previous report (which looked at survey responses from 2021-22), our latest analysis has found that flexibility, autonomy and work-life balance continue to sit high up on the list of wellbeing requests among UK employees.

As the remote and hybrid working models of organisations become more established, opinions about hybrid working and what it actually means tend to be sharply split *within* organisations.

Some employees yearn for the face-to-face social buzz of the office and worry about cultural erosion due to remote working.

Others fear their leaders will reverse remote working practices in future, reducing their autonomy and negatively impacting their work-life balance.

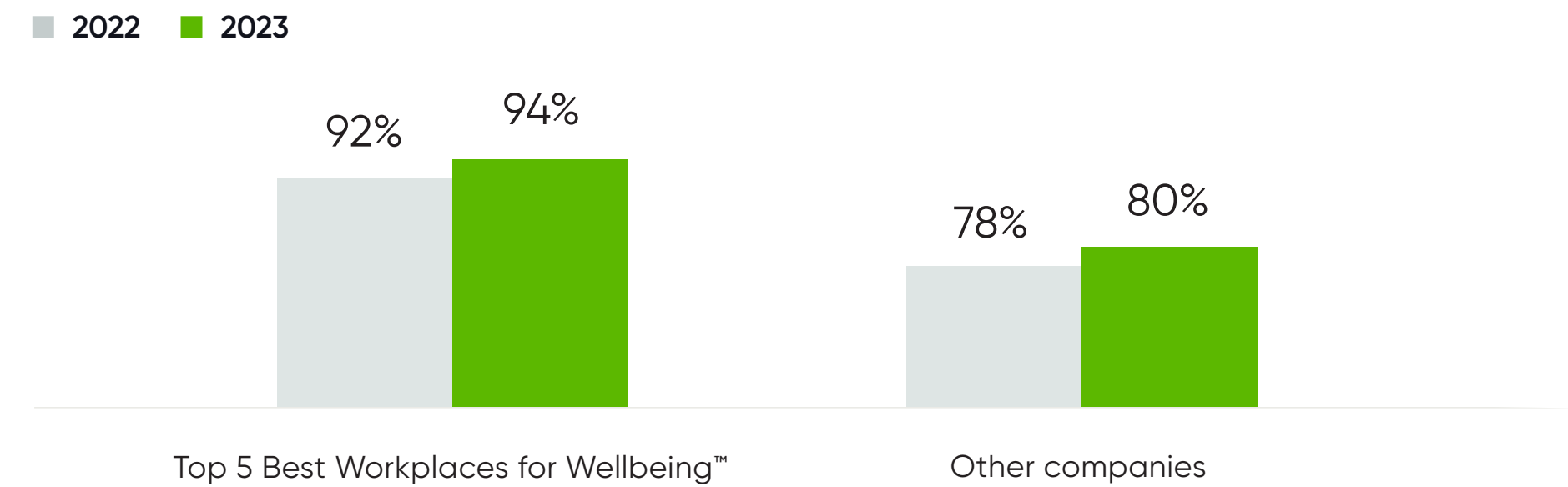
Taking a people-centric approach, Best Workplaces for Wellbeing™ are providing more inclusive hybrid working models that balance their operational, cultural and individuals' needs.

EMPLOYEE COMMENT

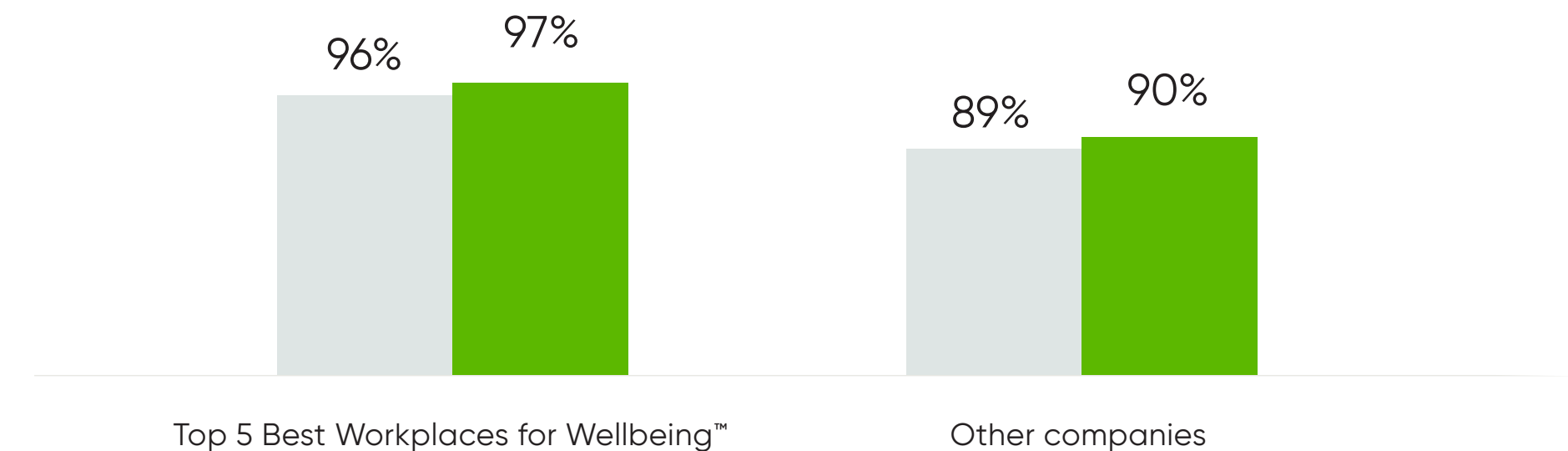
"Being able to work a Monday and Friday at home has vastly improved my personal wellbeing. Working Monday from home has reduced my Sunday evening anxiety. Additionally, knowing that on a Friday we can plan to travel somewhere for that weekend shortly after 5pm, changes the dynamic of our family time together."

INSIGHTS FROM GREAT PLACE TO WORK'S TRUST INDEX™ SURVEY

"People are encouraged to balance their work life and their personal life."



"I am able to take time off from work when I think it's necessary."



EMPLOYEE COMMENT

"Continue to encourage the "roam" way of working. Allow employees to work additional hours during the week to then take half day Fridays or nine-day fortnights."

BEST PRACTICES FROM THE BEST WORKPLACES FOR WELLBEING™

At **Secure Trust Bank Group**, when employees have bank holidays off, they are given the option to instead take the leave on an alternative day of their choosing. This allows employees to pick leave that better suits their schedules, or sync up their schedules with loved ones.



CATEGORY: LARGE, RANK 25

Baringa have created an employee resource group called the 'Flexible Workers Network'. This is a support group for their employees who can connect with one another and access an array of resources to help with optimising flexible working patterns, to improve work-life balance.



CATEGORY: SUPER LARGE, RANK 2



EMPLOYEE COMMENT

"By understanding that everyone has their own issues be it health or issues at home and by supporting flexible working, you enable that employee to feel that they are able to complete their work effectively and have time and headspace to deal with personal issues. When people feel they are being productive and valued at work they are better able to deal with life outside of it."



Financial Support & Security

The ongoing cost of living crisis has made financial wellbeing an urgent concern for more UK employees than ever before. Employee responses to our survey revealed the all-consuming nature of money worries and genuine pleas for immediate relief more than a need for longer-term support to bolster financial wellbeing.

In addition to providing bespoke financial wellbeing support for their people, Best Workplaces for Wellbeing™ also offer their employees peace of mind through job security – often the foundation for financial wellbeing.

In fact...

94%

of employees at these companies believe their employer would only lay off people as a last resort.

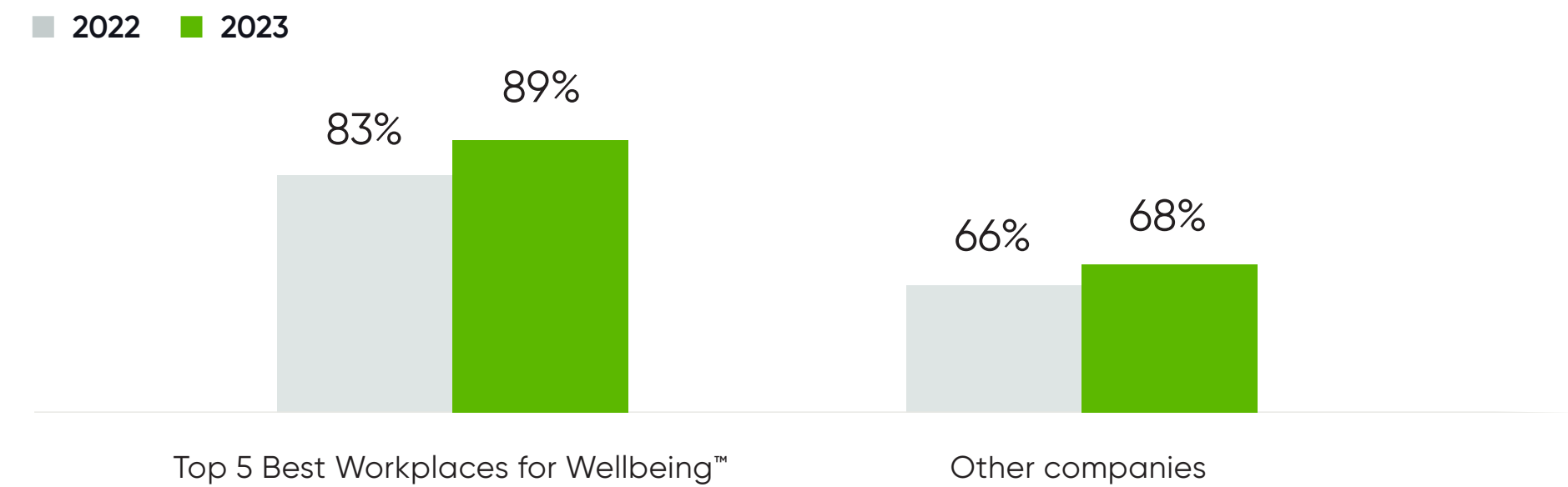
Now more than ever, employers have a duty of care and mandate to provide tailored financial support for their people. Without it, workplaces risk significant productivity losses and increased employee turnover as people seek higher reward packages elsewhere.

EMPLOYEE COMMENT

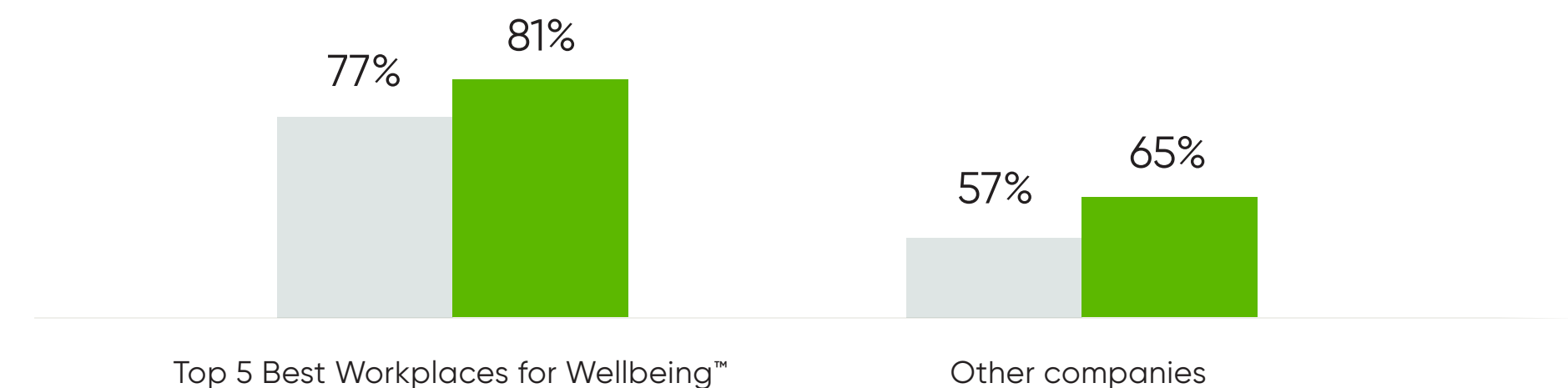
"I think financial compensation is the largest determining factor at the moment. During work hours the company does a great job of providing opportunities to open up about personal issues [...] how employees afford to live outside of work are driving a lot of conversations at the moment."

INSIGHTS FROM GREAT PLACE TO WORK'S TRUST INDEX™ SURVEY

"People here are paid fairly for the work they do."



"I receive support from my organisation to plan and manage my personal financial situation."



EMPLOYEE COMMENT

"[Help] me out financially as I am at work freezing because I can't afford to turn my heating on. I am ineligible for the COL [cost of living] payment because I haven't worked here long enough despite earning way below the base salary."



BEST PRACTICES FROM THE BEST WORKPLACES FOR WELLBEING™

Ombudsman Services provides free daily breakfast and lunch to employees. In addition to this, they also have a packed meal service for employees to take meals home and a pantry filled with essentials. For those that work remotely, the organisation sends food hampers weekly.



CATEGORY: LARGE, RANK 26



EMPLOYEE COMMENT

“My only worries in life are like most people, financial. Give staff a real monetary pay rise above inflation.”

BEST PRACTICES FROM THE BEST WORKPLACES FOR WELLBEING™

To support employees with the cost-of-living crisis, **Intuit Quickbooks** has created their ‘Commuter Assistance Program’ which provides employees with a discount on travel cards and parking. This involves giving employees an extra £100 a month to manage the rising costs of travel.



CATEGORY: LARGE, RANK 11

In recognition of the concerns employees had over the cost-of-living crisis, and keen to support where they could beyond their usual reward & recognition structure, **Lindt & Sprüngli UK Ltd** gave all employees a one-off payment of £500. The payment was inclusive of everyone in the organisation, regardless of tenure or role, and paid as a flat payment, so those on lower pay or lower hours were able to feel the benefit more than those employees on higher incomes.



CATEGORY: LARGE, RANK 19

KEY TAKEAWAY

EMPLOYEE COMMENT

“Less snazzy solutions – more little interactions – just asking how you are, etc.”

Ultimately, there are a myriad of programmes, practices and perks that employers *could* offer to support their people's wellbeing.

But if we've learned anything from the more than 140,000 anonymous voices raised in our survey, it's that – besides empowering employees with flexibility and financial support where possible – **people just want the opportunity to be listened to and supported, genuinely and regularly, by their manager.**

By focusing on getting the basics right, more employers can significantly improve employee's wellbeing at work, and become a truly great workplace for all.

It really is that simple.



Supporting Your Employee Wellbeing Strategy

Mental Wellbeing Masterclass for People Managers

The raw, vulnerable business of supporting direct reports with personal wellbeing and mental health is one where many people managers still feel entirely out of their depth.

Get in touch to book your 90-minute virtual or half-day in-person masterclass tailored to address your organisation's priority areas.

ABOUT THE WORKSHOP:

Up to 20 participants from your organisation who have people manager responsibilities can attend the same masterclass, which includes a self-assessment questionnaire before and after the session.

Participants will leave with:

- ✓ A comprehensive understanding of how to conceptualise workplace wellbeing;
- ✓ Tools for spotting signs of potential stress or mental health issues in others;
- ✓ Practice in applying skills of active listening and signposting to relevant situations;
- ✓ Inspirational best practices from Best Workplace™ organisations;
- ✓ Enhanced self-awareness and challenged personal assumptions;
- ✓ And guided action-planning to improve your team's wellbeing.

Visit greatplacetowork.co.uk/wellbeing to get started.



Get in touch today



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