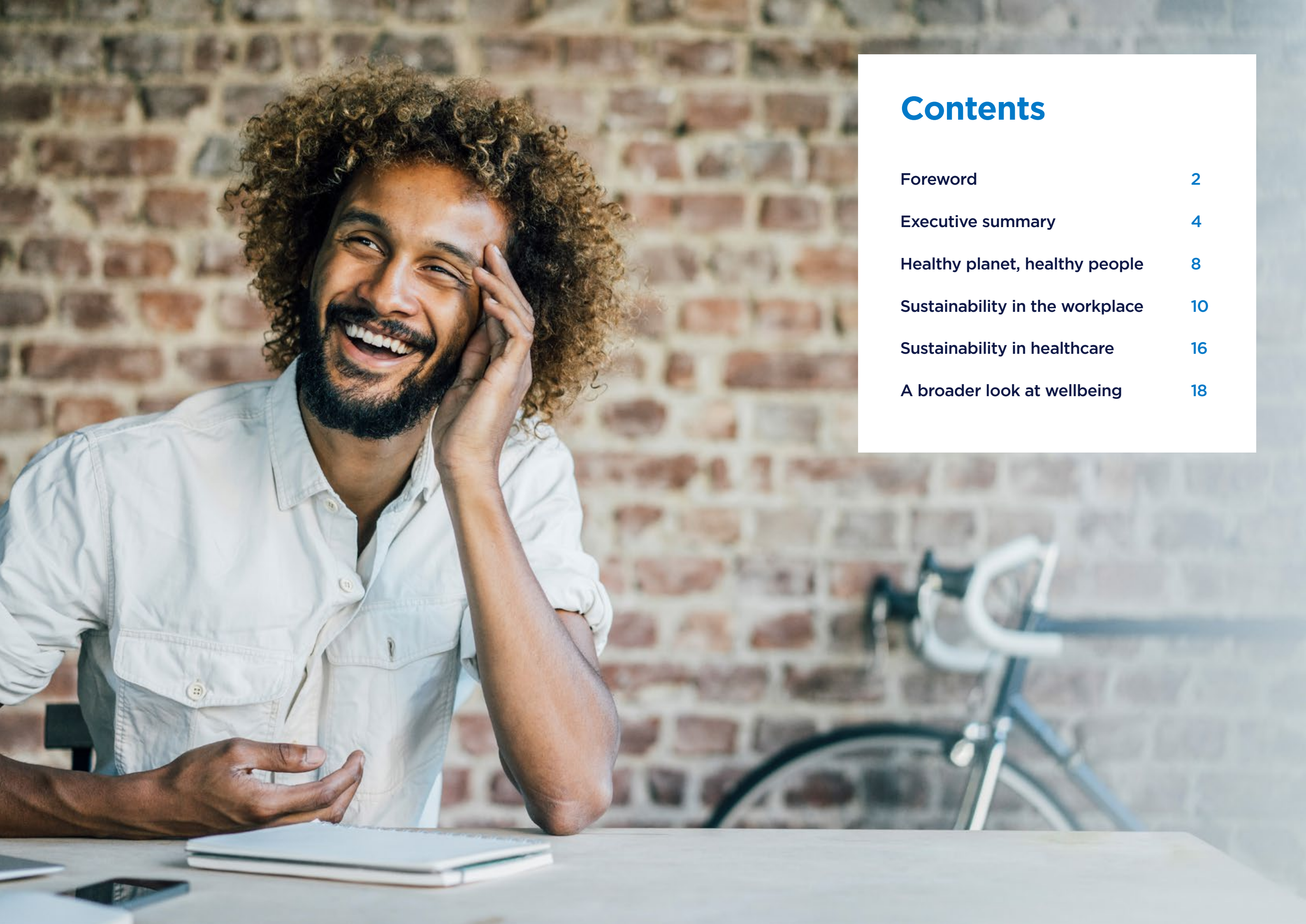


# Bupa Wellbeing Index 2023:

**Healthy planet,  
healthy people**



July 2023  
[bupa.co.uk](https://bupa.co.uk)



## Contents

|                                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Foreword                        | 2  |
| Executive summary               | 4  |
| Healthy planet, healthy people  | 8  |
| Sustainability in the workplace | 10 |
| Sustainability in healthcare    | 16 |
| A broader look at wellbeing     | 18 |

# Foreword

---

It's been a year since the first release of the Bupa Wellbeing Index, a landmark survey that uncovers the state of the UK's health and wellbeing. As we reflect on the past year, we are reminded that much has changed in the global and geo-political landscape, and in turn, our healthcare needs and expectations have evolved, influenced by these changing circumstances around us.

As we continue to seek optimum physical and mental wellness, exploring innovative, and comprehensive approaches to prevent and treat health issues, we're becoming increasingly aware of the strong connection between people's health and the health of the planet.

Organisations worldwide have recognised the vital importance of sustainability in shaping a better future, to support the health of their workforce and fulfil their responsibilities for future generations. In turn, it becomes paramount for businesses to actively involve their people in shaping sustainable workplace practices. Sustainability has emerged as a pivotal driver of employee engagement, as many of us are increasingly motivated by meaningful initiatives that make a positive

difference. This can drive productivity, loyalty and importantly, talent retention. Indeed, despite worries around the cost of living, our latest research tells us that two-fifths of all respondents (**42%**) say they'd accept a job on lower pay to work for a more ethical or environmentally friendly organisation.

At Bupa, we firmly believe that sustainability is not merely an external commitment; it starts from within. And now is the time that organisations must forge a collective force for positive change.

Through this chapter, our aim is to equip business leaders with practical strategies and actionable insights that give them the tools to unlock the full potential of

their workforce and foster a culture of environmental stewardship. We will also explore the intersection of sustainability and healthcare, delving into the unique opportunities and challenges faced by healthcare providers in embracing sustainable initiatives. This is just the start of the journey, where there is still so much to learn over the coming years and no doubt, decades. As a first step it is important that we engage our people to join this journey with us.

By highlighting best practice through inspiring case studies, discussing innovative solutions, and exploring the transformative power of employee involvement, we seek to inspire and guide organisations towards a more sustainable future.



**Carlos Jaureguizar**  
CEO for Bupa Global & UK

# Executive summary

## A picture of health

### A range of concerns amongst respondents

Climate change. Social injustice. Poverty. Mental health. These are all significant concerns, generating anxiety among respondents. The survey findings reveal that **60%** of respondents are anxious<sup>ii</sup> about the negative impacts of climate change, while **79%** are anxious<sup>ii</sup> about the cost of living.

- There also is a significant sense of responsibility among younger people for facing up to ecological issues. Nearly half of Gen Z (**46%**) agree<sup>iii</sup> they feel the burden of climate change on their shoulders.
- The majority of both Millennials and Gen Z (**56%** and **59%** respectively) agree their anxiety around environmental issues will only increase in the future.

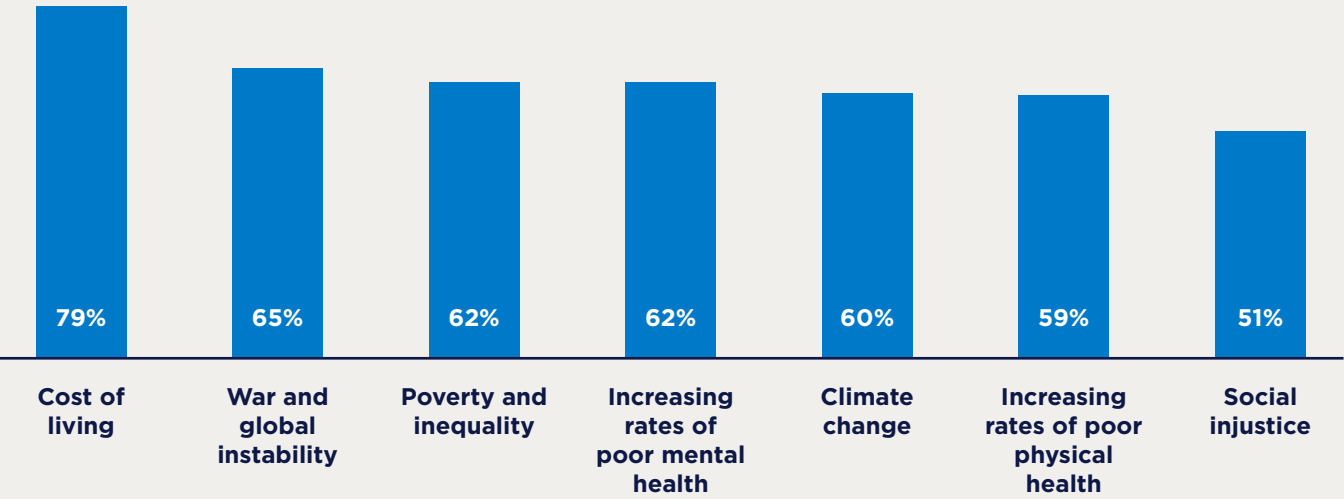
### A backdrop of poor health

The survey reveals physical (**21%**) and mental health (**24%**) are characterised as 'poor'<sup>iv</sup> by more than one in five people, it's clear that addressing this issue should be a priority. Indeed, an overwhelming **88%** of respondents believe that their health and wellbeing is a priority<sup>v</sup> for them in the weeks and months ahead.

### An evolving healthcare system

The importance of pioneering a more sustainable healthcare system is underscored by the increasing pressure on the system, with nearly six in ten people (**59%**) expressing anxiety<sup>ii</sup> about their physical health. Digital services could play a crucial role in promoting sustainability in healthcare going forward, with nearly one in ten people (**9%**) attending remote medical appointments in the last three months alone. However, only **9%** of people report making lifestyle changes for preventative measures in the last three months, highlighting that there is more to do in changing mindsets. Prioritising preventive care not only benefits individual wellbeing but also brings significant environmental advantages - by reducing reliance on resource-intensive treatments, healthcare systems can minimise their ecological footprint and contribute to a more sustainable future.

What are people in the UK worried about?





## A sustainability-minded workforce

### Inclusivity and collaboration at work

One in five UK workers surveyed (**21%**) believe that it's not enough for senior leaders to implement sustainability initiatives without wider input and buy-in from the organisation and staff.

### Employee motivation

Nearly half of those who are employed (**45%**) say their motivation at work would increase<sup>vi</sup> if they had the opportunity to contribute their sustainable and eco-friendly initiatives to leadership. A similar proportion (**44%**) say the same about having the chance to recommend sustainable and eco-friendly companies to partner with.

### Enthusiasm and innovation among younger generations

Younger people show enthusiasm when it comes to sustainability. An impressive **56%** of Gen Z respondents say their motivation at work would increase<sup>vi</sup> at the prospect of presenting their own sustainable initiatives to leadership. On the other side of the coin, nearly half (**48%**) of Gen Z workers surveyed agree<sup>iii</sup> that they would be willing to consider leaving their jobs if their employer doesn't demonstrate action on social and environmental issues.

### Prioritising sustainability over traditional perks

The survey reveals that employee engagement in sustainability is more appealing than traditional workplace perks. The desire to have a say in sustainability practices significantly outweighs perks such as free yoga sessions (**37%**<sup>vi</sup>) or having an office dog (**44%**<sup>vi</sup>).

### Commitment to ethical and environmentally friendly organisations

Nearly half (**42%**<sup>i</sup>) express their willingness to accept a pay cut to work for a more ethical or environmentally friendly organisation. On average, respondents are willing to accept a **19%** reduction in salary, highlighting their deep-rooted commitment to meaningful and sustainable work – this again rises amongst Gen Z employees to **23%**.

### Continued investment in sustainability

Despite concerns over rising costs, **30%** of respondents emphasise the importance of continued investment in sustainability initiatives. They fear that cutbacks in eco initiatives may undermine the progress made in creating a more sustainable workplace and urge employers to ensure sustainability strategies are preserved.

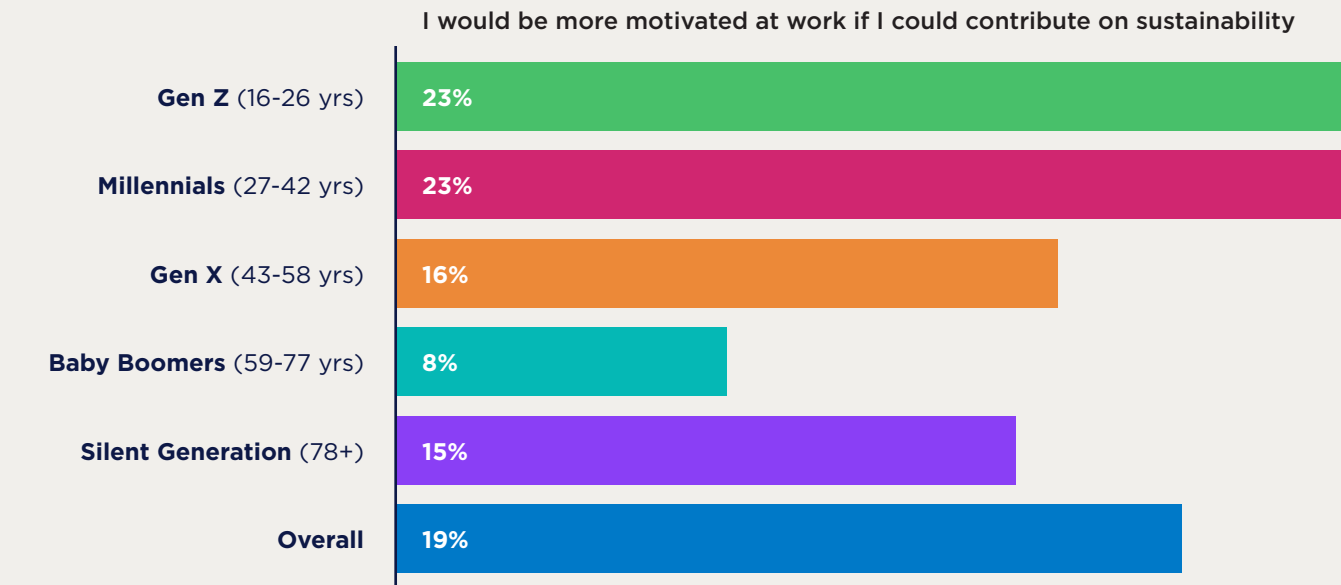
### Future importance of sustainability

Looking ahead, **28%** of respondents believe that sustainability will become even more critical as Generation Z and Generation Alpha (people born between 2010 and 2025) enter the workforce in larger numbers. This belief is further reinforced by **34%** of Gen Z respondents, illustrating their growing expectations for sustainable practices within organisations.

### An impact on mental health

Across the board, workers are also more likely than ever to say that if their employer does not take action on social or environmental issues, it will have a negative effect on their mental health and wellbeing at work – **42%** of all workers agree<sup>iii</sup> compared with **33%** in a 2021 Bupa survey<sup>i</sup>.

## Sustainability and motivation



# Healthy planet, healthy people

Against the backdrop of an evolving climate crisis, the connection between individual wellbeing and a sustainable planet has become increasingly apparent.

In recognising this link, it's clear that organisations must prioritise sustainability to not only preserve our environment but also protect the wellbeing of their people. By weaving sustainability into the fabric of their operations, organisations can cultivate a culture of shared environmental responsibility while simultaneously nurturing the health and happiness of their workforce. This holistic approach not only fuels employee motivation and satisfaction, retention and productivity, but also contributes to the wellbeing of people and the planet as a whole.



Rachel Murray, Head of Employee Health and Wellbeing for Bupa Global & UK said:  
“When people feel a deep connection to an organisation’s purpose and see their efforts manifesting in a sustainable future, the benefits extend far beyond planet health. Engaging the workforce in meaningful sustainable practices provides a profound sense of fulfilment and purpose, leading to more job satisfaction and overall wellbeing.”

## Case study Healthy Cities



Highlighting the connection between our health and the environment, Bupa research reveals that a significant proportion of adults in the UK (**38%**) spend less than an hour a day outdoors, despite reporting that their mental (**47%**) or physical (**47%**) health suffers if they spend too much time inside.

In June 2023 Bupa Global & UK’s Healthy Cities programme worked to address this challenge head-on by empowering its people, partners and customers to increase their outdoor activity levels through a dedicated Healthy Cities app. By participating, individuals not only improved their own wellbeing but also unlocked investment from the Bupa Foundation for the restoration of urban environments.

## Making an impact in the community

Bupa’s Healthy Cities programme is an example of an initiative that prioritises wellbeing while also fostering a sense of shared responsibility and delivering impact for the wider community.

The Bupa Foundation has donated over £7m in grants since 2015, and in the last year alone has supported 80 charities, improving the wellbeing of millions of people.



Foundation

# Bupa Foundation: making an impact on the ground

## Supporting healthier communities

The Bupa Foundation helps create healthier communities that improve people and planet health. As part of Healthy Cities, Bupa colleagues unlocked funds to support the Bupa Foundation grants to these projects:

**£350k**  
£350,000 fund helping local charities and schools to make their community healthier

**£250k**  
£250,000 fund with Trees for Cities to plant urban forests in the UK

**50**  
Supporting 50 fishermen to collect plastic to clean up the Nile. Plastics are recycled into textiles or packaging.

**2,000**  
Safe drinking water for 2,000 people in Narok county Kenya through the installation of a water bore hole.

## Single Homeless Project

Single Homeless Project is active across all 31 London boroughs – supporting people in crisis, and helping them take steps towards independence and employment.

**253**  
Greenhouse sessions

**157**  
clients engaged

**34**  
day trips

**3**  
camping trips

# Sustainability in the workplace: empowering employees to make a difference

The findings from our latest Bupa Wellbeing Index highlight the growing expectations of employees to be actively involved in shaping sustainable practices at work. By embracing wider input and buy-in from their people, organisations can unlock the full potential of their sustainability initiatives, ensuring greater success and effectiveness.

In the pursuit of sustainability, organisations across various sectors also face the challenge of meeting ambitious sustainability and net zero targets within specified timelines. This requires new and innovative approaches, as well as highlighting the need for collaborative thinking to overcome barriers.

James O'Reilly, Chief Risk and Sustainability Officer for Bupa Global & UK, emphasises, **“Gone are the days when the workforce observes sustainability efforts from the sidelines. They want their voices to be heard, their ideas to be valued. And above all, they want to see innovative solutions that they can see will make a tangible difference. The agile thinking of start-ups appeals to today’s workforce who want to see urgent action.”**

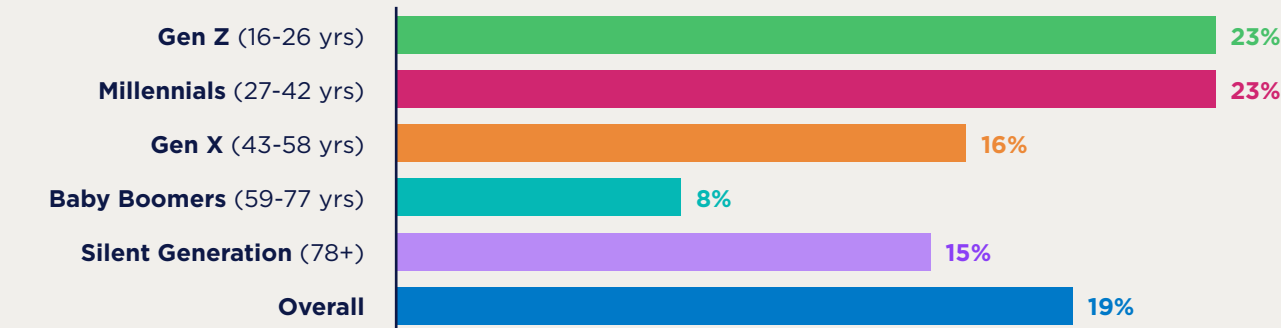
## Supporting the future workforce

A strong commitment to meeting sustainability targets is also imperative when it comes to the war for talent. Nearly half of Gen Z workers are willing to leave their jobs if their employer doesn't demonstrate action on environmental issues.

Alongside this, on average, respondents are willing to accept a **19%** reduction in salary to work for a more ethical or environmentally friendly organisation, rising to **23%** among Gen Z, as they continue to become a larger proportion of the workforce.

And there's growing evidence that employees are increasingly affected by environmental concerns. Nearly half of Gen Z (**46%**) and Millennials (**47%**) agree they feel the burden of climate change on their shoulders, making it important for employers to factor this into their thinking on staff wellbeing.

### How much of a pay cut would people take to work for a more sustainable company?



## Giving people a say: new initiatives

Recognising the power in harnessing employee action, Bupa established its eco-Disruptive programme, now in its third year. This initiative serves as a platform for Bupa people and start-ups to collaborate and explore innovative healthcare solutions that can disrupt traditional practices and accelerate progress towards sustainability targets. Through eco-Disruptive, Bupa people and eco start-ups work together to develop and market a product which helps tackle some of the biggest issues facing the planet, particularly within the healthcare industry.

By giving people a stake in the situation and promoting employee initiatives, organisations like Bupa empower their workforce to be active participants in shaping a sustainable future. This approach fosters a culture of innovation, engagement and continuous improvement, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and environmentally responsible workplace.

# Employee-led initiative at Cromwell Hospital: driving sustainable innovation

Cromwell Hospital, supported by Bupa's eco-Disruptive programme, has become the first private hospital in the UK to trial a groundbreaking medical device that captures and recycles waste anaesthetic gases.

The initiative, led by employees, aims to address the environmental impact of anaesthetic waste and reduce the carbon footprint of hospitals. The innovative SID-Dock system, developed by SageTech Medical, captures **99.9%** of waste anaesthetic gases, making it a significant step towards sustainability in healthcare.

The partnership between Bupa's Cromwell Hospital and SageTech Medical exemplifies the companies' commitment to employee-driven sustainability initiatives and fostering collaborations with innovative start-ups.

Cromwell Hospital also partnered with 2021 eco-Disruptive UK winner Upcycled Medical, who instead of using crude oil to make new plastic, turns existing marine litter (waste plastic) into upcycled clothing. All healthcare professionals at the hospital wear uniforms made by Upcycled Medical. Approximately seven to nine bottles that would have gone to landfill go into the making of every piece of medical clothing.



Sarah Melia, General Manager for Bupa Health Services said: **“Over the last two years, we’ve partnered with eco-Disruptive start-ups at Cromwell Hospital to help make our practices more sustainable. This has had a positive impact on the hospital as well as created pride in the team of the steps they’ve taken to help make a difference to the planet.”**



# How to do it: effective approaches for employee engagement

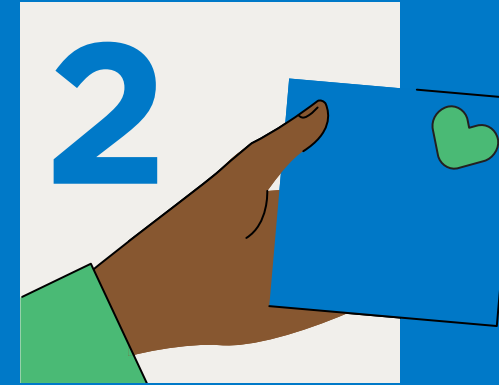
While the importance of sustainability in the workplace is widely accepted, turning this awareness into actionable initiatives can be a challenge for organisations. It's not enough to simply acknowledge the significance of sustainability; organisations must actively involve their people in driving these efforts.

In light of this, we have curated a collection of practical tips and strategies to help companies of all sizes to effectively engage their staff. By implementing these approaches, businesses can bridge the gap between awareness and action, fostering a culture of environmental responsibility and empowering their workforce to make a tangible impact.



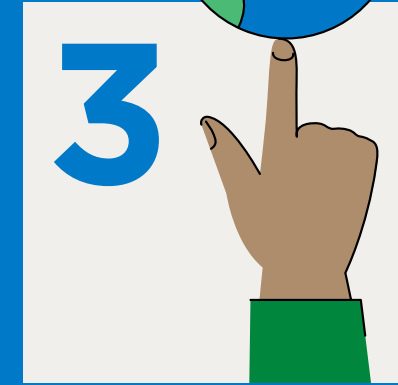
## Establish dedicated platforms for idea sharing and collaboration:

- Create online forums or suggestion boxes where staff members can freely share their sustainable initiatives, ideas and suggestions.
- Encourage collaboration by facilitating communication and idea exchange among people from different teams, business units or markets.
- Provide regular opportunities, such as workshops or brainstorming sessions, for employees to come together and discuss sustainability-related topics.



## Implement and recognise programmes:

- Implement programmes to support people health and planet health, such as cycle to work schemes, recycling, or vegetarian meal options.
- Recognise and celebrate staff contributions to reinforce their sense of accomplishment and inspire others to get involved.
- Establish sustainability awards or incentives to honour outstanding initiatives and efforts, creating a culture that values and encourages sustainability.



## Integrate sustainability into employee training and development:

- Incorporate sustainability training and education into onboarding programmes to ensure that all people have a solid understanding of sustainable practices.
- Offer ongoing sustainability-focused training sessions to enhance knowledge and skills in areas such as energy conservation, waste reduction and responsible consumption.
- Provide resources, such as online materials or toolkits, to support employees in making sustainable choices in their day-to-day work.



## Establish clear communication channels:

- Create regular communication forums, such as team meetings or online platforms, where staff members can provide feedback, suggestions and concerns regarding sustainability practices.
- Actively listen to employee input, address their concerns, and communicate updates and progress on sustainability initiatives.
- Foster a two-way dialogue to ensure that people feel heard and valued in the decision-making process.



## Encourage employee-led task forces or working groups:

- Empower people to form task forces or 'green teams' focused on sustainability initiatives, allowing them to take ownership of projects and drive meaningful change.
- Provide resources and support to these groups, such as dedicated time, budget and access to decision-makers, to facilitate their work and ensure their initiatives are successful.

# Sustainability in healthcare

In healthcare, the importance of pioneering a more sustainable system is paramount – particularly in light of increasing pressure on the system, and, as our survey reports, nearly six in ten people (59%) currently feeling anxious<sup>ii</sup> about increasing rates of poor physical health.

People are also aware of the impact that the healthcare system itself has on the environment, and over half (56%) agree the healthcare industry has a responsibility to be more sustainable.

## Digital health solutions

One potential solution to explore is digital services and their role in promoting sustainability. For example, our survey reveals that in the last three months alone, nearly one in ten (9%) of people have attended a remote medical appointment. And 9% of people (rising to 13% of 16-24 year olds) have worn a wearable health tracker, with many capable of remote healthcare monitoring for markers like heart rate, blood pressure and blood sugar.

This digital transformation not only enhances efficiency but also contributes to sustainability efforts. Digital services such as telemedicine and remote monitoring reduce the need for physical travel, resulting in decreased carbon emissions and a smaller ecological footprint. Embracing these digital technologies enables healthcare providers to improve patient outcomes while simultaneously reducing their environmental impact.



Across Bupa Care Services' 130+ care homes and retirement villages, care records are going paperless, with all medical notes recorded and safely stored online and on the go. This digital transformation saves thousands of sheets of paper but crucially, frees up Bupa's 10,000 strong frontline workforce to do what they are most passionate about: caring.

## The power of prevention

A key focus in the months and years ahead must be on recognising the value of prevention in healthcare and its positive implications for the planet. It's concerning that fewer than one in ten (9%) of people report making any lifestyle changes to contribute to preventive measures in the last three months. There is a role for employers here; people reported that initiatives associated with maintaining good health would increase<sup>vi</sup> their motivation at work; including free gym memberships (53%), private health insurance (62%) and cycle to work schemes (40%).

Shifting towards a proactive approach and prioritising preventive care not only benefits individual wellbeing but also yields significant environmental advantages. By reducing the reliance on resource-intensive treatments and interventions, healthcare systems can minimise their ecological footprint and contribute to a more sustainable future.

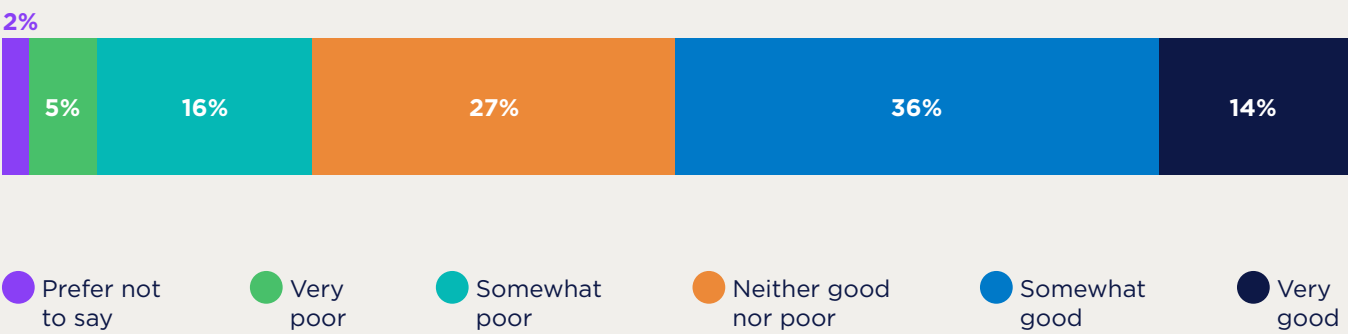
# What benefits are people motivated by at work?



# A broader look at wellbeing

As we delve further into the findings of our survey, it becomes evident that people’s overall wellbeing is an area in need of improvement. Against a backdrop where physical (21%) and mental health (24%) are characterised as ‘poor’<sup>iv</sup> by more than one in five people, it’s clear that addressing this issue should be a priority. Our survey showed that an overwhelming 88% of respondents believe that their health and wellbeing is a priority<sup>iv</sup> for them in the weeks and months ahead.

How people rate their physical health



When comparing the figures from the 2022 Wellbeing Index and the new 2023 edition, we can observe some similarities and differences in the respondents’ ratings of their physical and mental health.

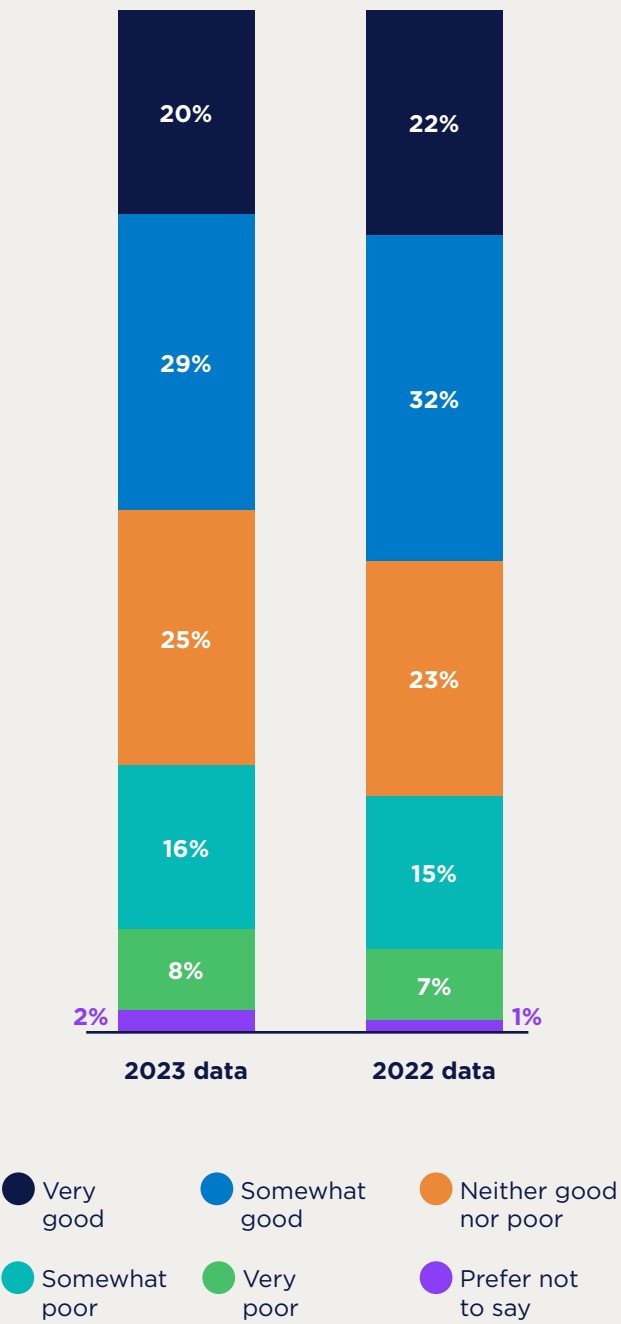
In 2022, 51% of respondents rated their physical health positively, with 14% reporting very good health and 37% saying their health was somewhat good. In contrast, in 2023, the percentage of respondents rating their physical health positively decreased to 49%. The number of respondents reporting very good physical health remained at 14%, while the proportion of respondents rating their physical health as somewhat good also remained similar at 36%. The overall pattern suggests a slight decrease in positive ratings of physical health from 2022 to 2023.

The same pattern can be seen when it comes to mental health. In 2022, 54% of respondents rated their mental health positively, with 22% saying their mental health was very good and 32% rating it somewhat good. In 2023, the percentage of respondents rating their mental health positively slightly decreased to 50%, the proportion of respondents reporting very good mental health decreases to 20%, while the percentage of those rating their mental health as somewhat good decreased to 29%.

Dr Robin Clark, Medical Director for Bupa Global & UK says:

“These statistics clearly show that there is work to be done to support a healthier population. We know that we are seeing the long-term impact of the pandemic on our health and wellbeing, and our focus is now on finding innovative solutions to address these issues. We want to encourage people to take action, provide information where and how they want to access it and support people to stay well for longer.”

How people rate their mental health, 2023 vs 2022



# A bright future ahead

Ultimately, the findings of this report emphasise the value of employee engagement in driving sustainable practices within organisations. It's clear that employees, especially younger generations, have a strong desire to be actively involved in sustainability initiatives. By recognising and harnessing this enthusiasm, businesses of all sizes have the opportunity to create a positive cycle of engagement, impact and transformation.

Empowering your people to actively contribute to sustainable practices not only harnesses the wisdom and creativity of the workforce, but also fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility. By providing people with the platform to contribute their ideas and perspectives, organisations can tap into a wealth of innovative solutions and drive collective efforts towards achieving sustainability goals. And as we look to the future, it's evident that sustainability will play an increasingly critical role, especially as Generation Alpha enter the workforce.

In all aspects of life we are becoming more cognisant of our environment, the threats to it and the role we have to play in protecting it. The journey towards a sustainable future requires a collective effort, in industry, by employers, and by individuals.

"Prevention is better than cure" is a phrase we've all heard. But it remains the biggest opportunity and challenge for both people's health, and the health of the planet. At Bupa, we're working hard to deliver high quality care which has minimal impact on the environment. We're developing healthcare pathways, practices and premises which have as little impact as possible on the environment. We're also expanding our digital offerings to help us deliver more sustainable healthcare.

By working together, embracing technology, innovation and change, we can improve the health of both people and our planet.

<sup>i</sup> All 'yes' answers combined

<sup>ii</sup> 'Very anxious' and 'Somewhat anxious' responses combined

<sup>iii</sup> 'Strongly agree' and 'agree' responses combined

<sup>iv</sup> 'Very poor' and 'somewhat poor' responses combined

<sup>v</sup> 'A high priority' and 'Somewhat of a priority' responses combined

<sup>vi</sup> 'Significantly increase' and 'Somewhat increase' responses combined

<sup>vii</sup> Comparison between two datasets where the same question was asked to respondents in June 2023 – the main Censuswide dataset referenced throughout this press release – and 2021, with research commissioned by Bupa and conducted by Opinion among a nat. rep. sample of 2,000 UK adults in November 2021

## About the research:

Bupa commissioned Censuswide to poll a nationally representative sample of 8,002 UK adults. The data was collected between 09.06.2023 – 16.06.2023. Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society and follows the MRS code of conduct which is based on the ESOMAR principles.



