

MEDIA RELEASE

8 OUT OF 10 AUSTRALIAN WORKERS FEEL UNSAFE SHARING THEIR STRUGGLES AT WORK

10 September 2020 - New research, released today by the Australian HR Institute (AHRI) and The Wellbeing Lab, has found that only 32.1% of Australian workers feel safe sharing their struggles at work.

According to the report, the number of Australian workers experiencing higher levels of job satisfaction, better performance and greater commitment to their organisation has halved from 14.7% in December 2019 to 7.4% in August 2020.

The research – largely targeted at 1,400 Australian professionals, administrative workers and owners, among others – also revealed that the number of respondents ‘not feeling bad but just getting by’ has increased by 8.4% between December and now. The findings highlighted that when struggle escalates, workers who lack resilience could find their wellbeing and performance to quickly diminish.

Danielle Jacobs, Co-Founder of The Wellbeing Lab said, “The research provides irrefutable evidence that organisations who have not increased their wellbeing resources at all through this period should seriously consider implementing a wider range of tools and resources to help workers navigate the impact of COVID-19.”

Sarah McCann-Bartlett, Chief Executive Officer, AHRI, said the research highlights the impact of a pandemic like COVID-19 can bring: drastic change in circumstances, loss of ‘traditional’ support networks like friends and family, isolation and anxiety, unknown or increased workloads, and fear of job change or loss could all be drivers for this significant drop in the number of people who feel they are thriving in current times.

There has been no increase in the number of Australian workplaces providing different kinds of wellbeing support, and only 37.6% of Australian workers reported their manager often expresses care for them.

McCann-Bartlett added, “AHRI has been gravely concerned about this, and I hope that armed with this knowledge, HR professionals, managers and colleagues will step in and support people who might be struggling with their mental health.

“National awareness days, such as R U OK? Day on the 10th of September, are a great way to draw attention to this ever-important issue, and it arrives at a time when we need it most.”

According to the research, workers have become significantly more likely to tell others about their struggles, but they continue to be reluctant to ask for help from their HR teams.

“While HR has done an exceptional job of caring for the mental health of employees during this pandemic, there is more to be done. There is an opportunity for HR teams to visibly show their ability to provide support and make a positive difference for workers’ wellbeing during these challenging times,” McCann-Bartlett said.

The results of ‘The state of wellbeing in the Australian workplaces’ is available [here](#).

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Notes to editors

In early August, The Wellbeing Lab, the Australian HR Institute and the David Cooperrider Center For Appreciative Inquiry surveyed over 1,400 Australian workers across all Australian states and territories. 401 of these participants had previously participated in the same survey during 2019 and 2020, adding validity to the data.

Industries were representative of Agriculture, Banking & Finance, Community & Social Services, Construction, Education, Government & Public Administration, Healthcare & Medical, Technology & Telecommunications, Manufacturing, Mining, Retail, Science, Tourism, and Transportation & Warehousing.

About the Australian HR Institute

The Australian HR Institute (AHRI) is the national association representing human resource and people management professionals with 20,000 members from Australia and across the globe.

About The Wellbeing Lab

Sought around the world for our ability to translate cutting-edge research in positive psychology and neuroscience into practical everyday actions, our global team at The Wellbeing Lab help people and workplaces to thrive. With decades of leadership experience in organisations of all sizes, we work with boards, leadership teams, managers, and employees to help them improve their resilience and grit, develop their strengths, and build psychological safety so they can do the best work of their lives. You can learn more at thewellbeinglab.com