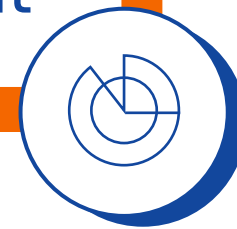




connect psych services

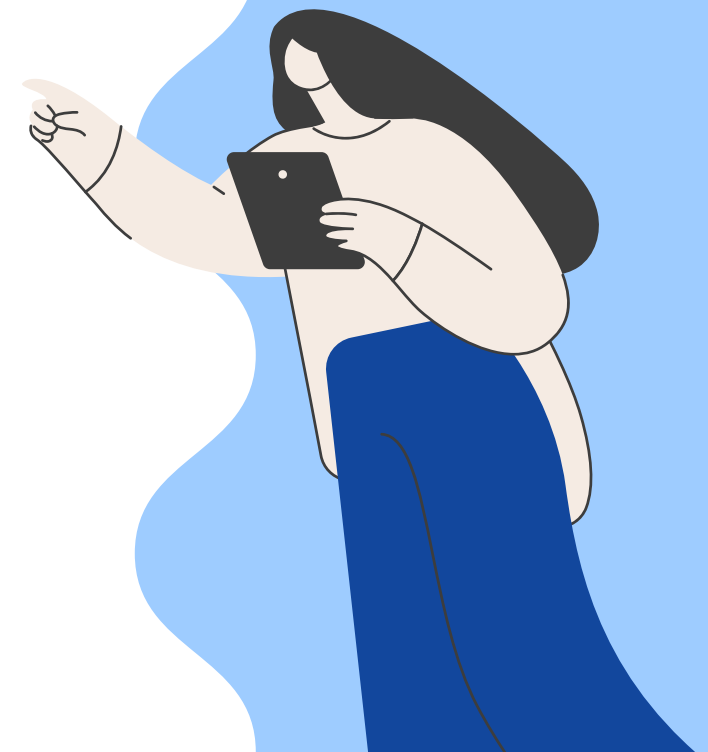
Australia's Mental Health  
& Workplace Wellbeing:

# Insights from a 5-Year Trend Analysis in Enhancing Employee Support and Engagement



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## Connect Psych Services – Humanising Digital Health

At Connect Psych Services, we've redefined Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) by focusing on what truly matters: employee wellbeing. Recognising the limitations of traditional, organisation-led models, we created an employee-first service tailored to the needs of the people who power workplaces.

Our approach to workplace mental health has always been driven by innovation, accessibility, and personalisation, and a commitment to continuously adapt to meet the shifting demands of workplaces.

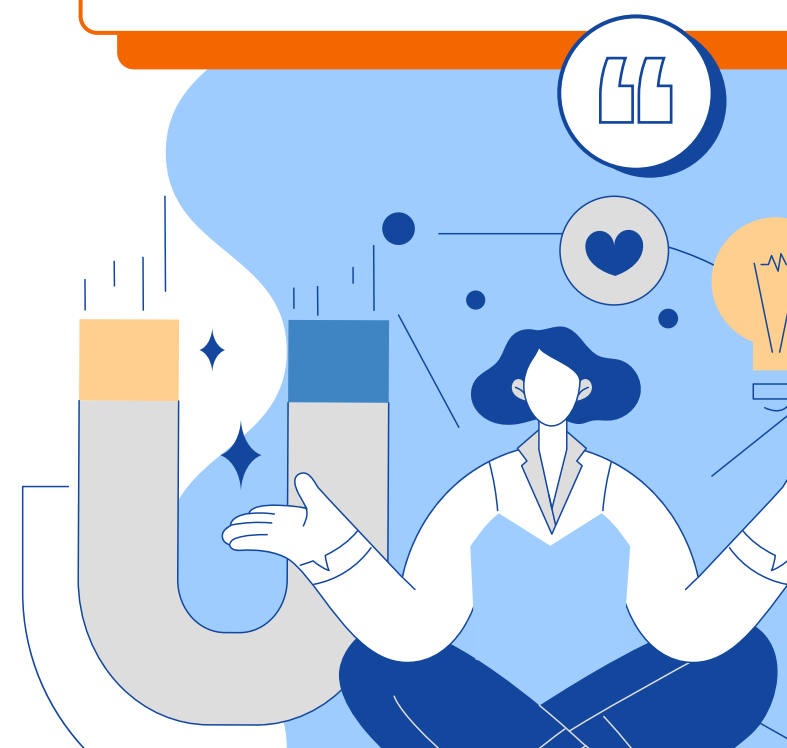
By continuing to evolve, we ensure that we remain relevant, effective and compliant, resonating with leaders and employees across all industries.

## Harnessing The Benign Online Disinhibition Effect

As one of Australia's first formal digital EAP platforms, Connect Psych Services leverages 'the benign online disinhibition effect' to make mental health support more accessible. This allows employees to express themselves more openly in an online setting, free from judgment. Over the past five years, we've created a safe, confidential, and approachable space that removes barriers often associated with traditional EAPs—such as limited availability, complex processes, and impersonal care.

By seamlessly matching employees with practitioners suited to their needs and schedules, we ensure personalised support while equipping leadership with tailored resources to enhance team wellbeing. Our diverse team of mental health experts, trained in evidence-based frameworks and industry-specific challenges, deliver high-quality care with a focus on adaptability and cultural competence. Through facilitated discussions, we actively break down stigma and promote meaningful workplace conversations, driving lasting change.

**“Connect Psych’s Best Fit Model has been a game-changer for our staff. By matching employees with the right practitioners, we’ve seen improved engagement and outcomes. This personalised care reinforces trust and shows our team their mental health matters.”**



## Centralised Real-Time Dashboard

RISE is Connect Psych's portal for Employers and Employees. 100% secure and managed in-house, ensuring technology is up to date, and can evolve as required to offer the best data, resources and analytics to support the needs of our EAP clients. With five years of robust data metrics we provide organisations with actionable insights.

## Data-Driven Innovations – RISE HR

Real-time data reporting has transformed how HR leaders approach workplace wellbeing. For the first time, organisations have immediate insights into employee engagement, distress patterns, mental health, and service utilisation. These tools enable proactive, data-driven strategies to address issues before they escalate, nurturing a more responsive and supportive workplace.

Our work spans across all industries, and while each sector faces unique challenges, they all share a pressing need for solutions that balance compliance with genuine impact. Anticipating regulatory changes early, we've positioned ourselves as leaders in meeting both legislative standards and broader mental health needs.

## Reflecting on Five Years of Impact

This report reflects five years of data, capturing the experiences of over 200 organisations that have partnered with Connect Psych Services. It highlights workplace wellbeing trends across Australia and identifies the sectors and strategies requiring immediate attention. We thank the organisations prioritising their people and witnessing the transformative impact of this commitment.

As we look to the future, Connect Psych Services remains committed to helping workplaces navigate these challenges. By continuing to prioritise employee wellbeing through innovative, evidence-based approaches, we aim to guide organisations towards building healthier, more resilient teams and sustainable workplace cultures.



**“Having access to Connect Psych’s after-hours support has been invaluable. Immediate help during a crisis prevents escalation and ensures our staff feel prioritised. This service has strengthened our commitment to mental health care.”**

**“The RISE dashboard has transformed how we support our team. With real-time insights into mental health trends, we can address issues proactively rather than reactively. This tool goes beyond a typical EAP, helping us create a workplace where our people feel genuinely supported.”**

**“RISE lets us adapt wellbeing programs instantly, targeting what our team needs most. Whether it’s stress management or resilience training, this data-driven approach helps us minimise risks and provide timely, meaningful support.”**

**“The real-time data from Connect Psych gives us actionable insights into staff wellbeing. By understanding emerging trends, we can provide targeted support and refine our strategies, creating a safer and more supportive workplace.”**



# Timelines and Headlines

## Key Trends in Australian Workplaces: 2020–2024

Australia's ever evolving workplace landscape has been shaped by significant societal, regulatory, and global influences. These trends highlight the growing emphasis on mental health, resilience, and adapting to emerging challenges.

1

### Rising Demand for EAPs and Telehealth

- **2020–2024:** The use of EAP's surged, driven by the pandemic and changing workplace needs. Telehealth innovations expanded access to mental health support.

2

### Impact of Natural Disasters on Workplaces

- **2020–2023:** Bushfires, floods, and other natural disasters disrupted operations across industries, highlighting the urgent need for trauma-informed workplace practices.

3

### Resilience Building and Leadership Development

- **2021–2024:** Employers increasingly prioritised leadership development programs aimed at enhancing psychological safety to create trust and confidence to speak up, address mental health challenges, and support an inclusive and high-performing workplace culture.

4

### Focus on Work–Life Balance

- **2022–2024:** Businesses embraced flexible work arrangements, launched innovative wellness programs, and implemented strategies to prioritise productivity and wellbeing.

5

### Relationship Breakdowns and Mental Health

- **2020–2021:** Relationship breakdowns surged during the COVID-19 pandemic, contributing to elevated rates of domestic violence, anxiety, depression, isolation and loneliness.

6

### Growing Concern Over Vicarious Trauma

- **2020–2024:** High-risk professions reported increased cases of vicarious trauma, prompting calls for better organisational support and preventive measures.

7

### Psychosocial Hazard Management

- **2022:** The Australian Government introduced groundbreaking regulations under the Work Health and Safety (WHS) framework, mandating organisations to address workplace psychosocial hazards,
- **2023–2024:** Organisations nationwide adopted robust policies, comprehensive training programs, and advanced systems to comply with these changes,

1

### Remote and Hybrid Work Challenges

The shift to remote work highlighted feelings of isolation, blurred work-life boundaries, and created "Zoom Fatigue." Hybrid work models brought flexibility, but introduced challenges around team cohesion, equity, and maintaining psychological safety in distributed teams.

2

### The Burnout Epidemic

Sustained demands on essential workers, such as healthcare professionals led to a widespread burnout crisis and role departures. Organisations increasingly sought systemic solutions, focusing on workload management and comprehensive wellbeing programs.

3

### Mental Health Stigma is Shifting

Workplace advocacy and awareness campaigns normalised conversations around mental health. This cultural shift and the acceptance of telehealth encouraged more employees, particularly men, to access mental health support, breaking down long-standing stigmas.

4

### Understanding Anxiety vs. Depression

A significant challenge persists in distinguishing between anxiety and depression, leading to misdiagnoses and missed opportunities for tailored support. Education and tools to clarify these differences are crucial for providing effective care.

5

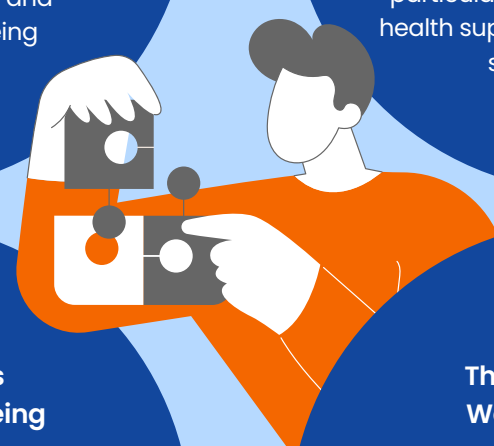
### Real-Time Data is Transforming Wellbeing

Organisations are turning to real-time data to track stress, absenteeism, and the impact of mental health initiatives. This proactive approach enables leaders to identify risks early and implement targeted interventions.

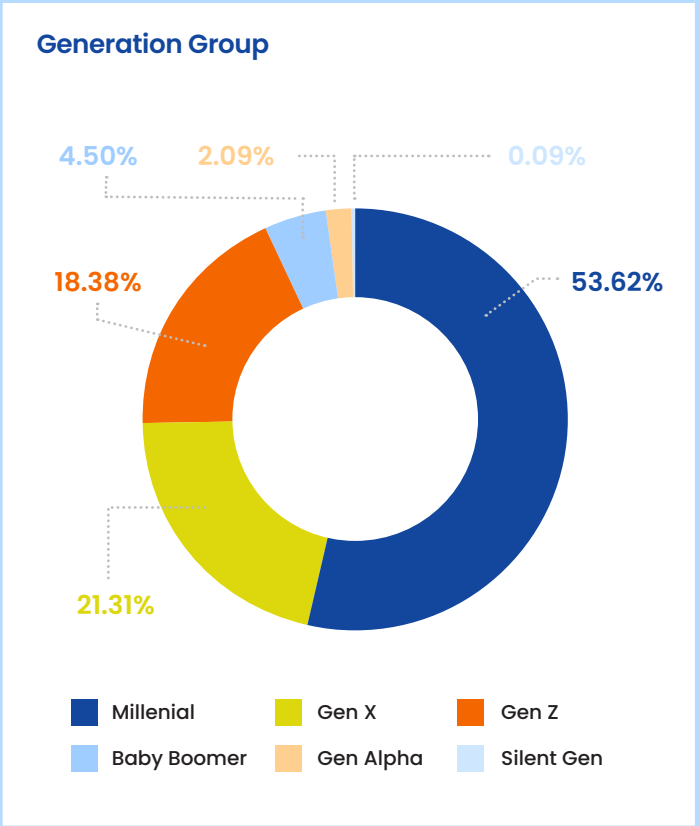
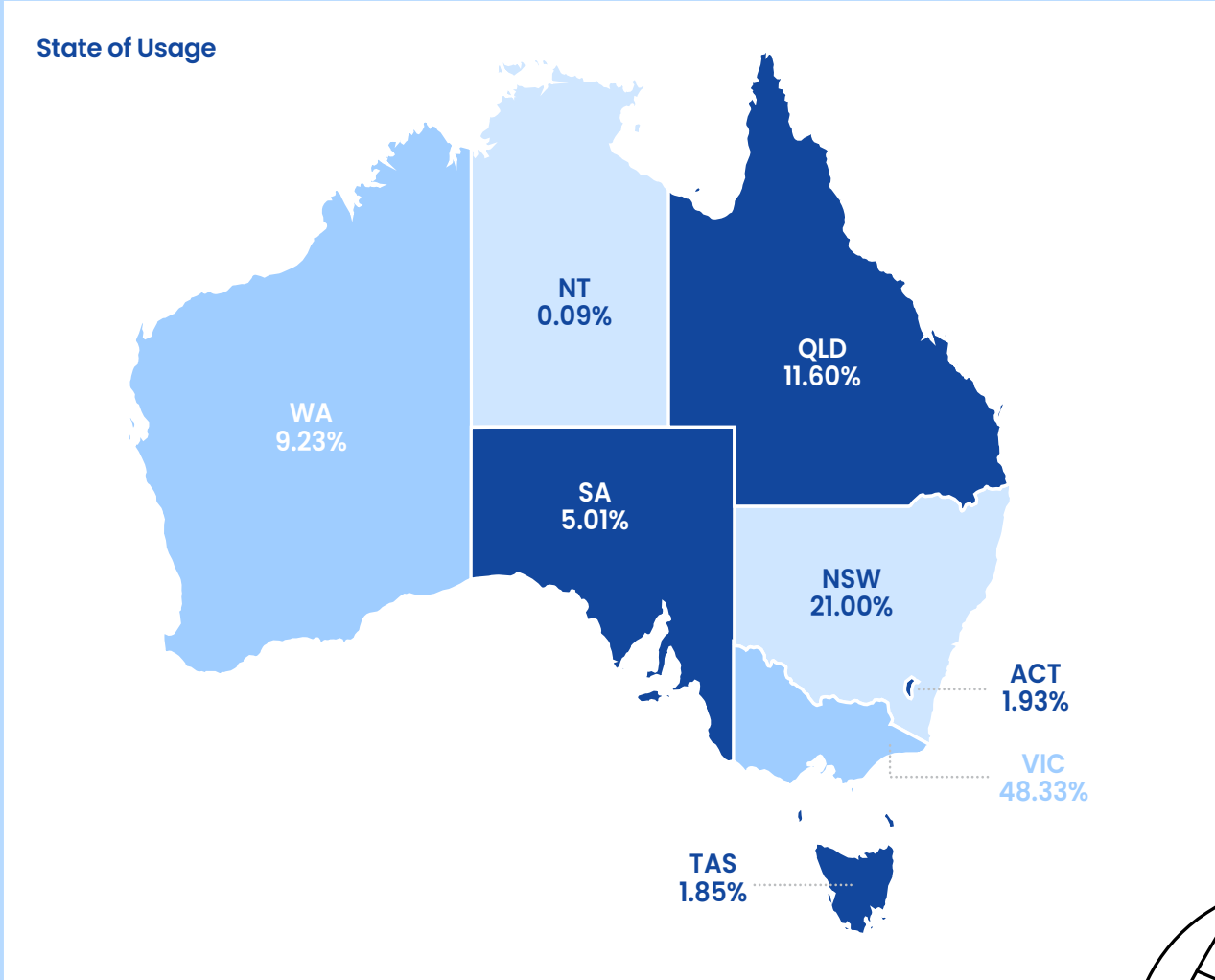
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### The Rise of Bespoke Wellbeing Solutions

Workplace wellbeing hubs and client-centric mental health models are redefining support systems. Customised platforms offering best-fit practitioners, accessible resources, and on-demand tools are meeting the diverse needs of modern workforces.

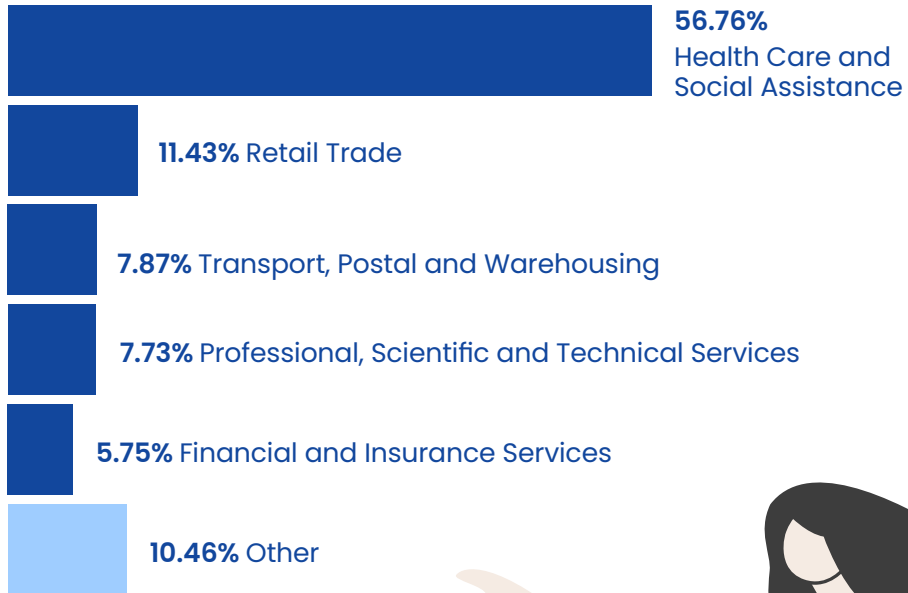


# Insights and Innovations in Workplace Mental Health

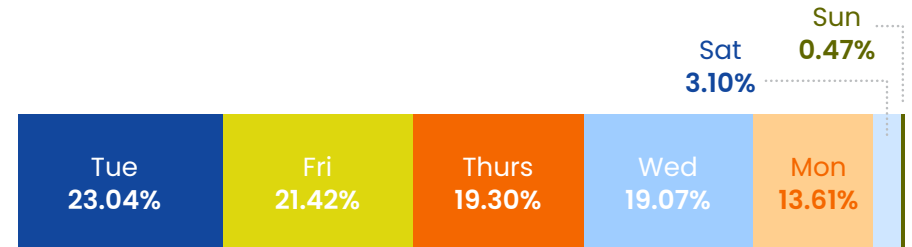


# Insights and Innovations in Workplace Mental Health

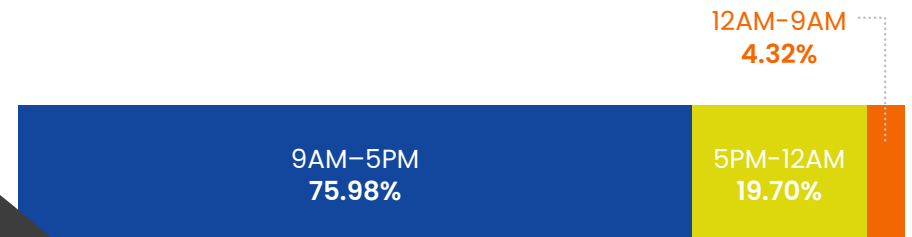
## Industry Breakdown



## Appointments per Day

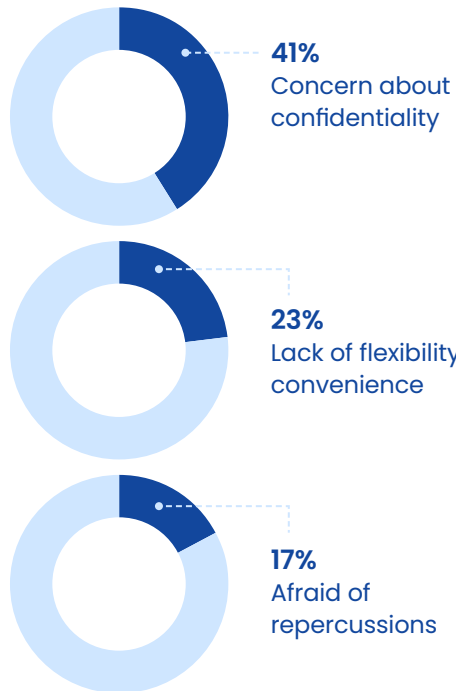


## Time Block When Appointments are Occurring



**Barriers to utilisation**

% Workers who needed support but selected the below reasons for not accessing it



The latest data from Superfriends Indicators of a Thriving Workplace (2024) highlights significant barriers to accessing mental health support in the workplace remain, with 40% of employees citing confidentiality concerns, 23% finding it inconvenient, and 17% fearing repercussions. These insights highlight the urgent need for workplaces to build trust, improve accessibility, and build a culture where seeking support is safe and encouraged.

**Utilisation Insights**

Data from the past five years shows August and September as peak months for EAP counselling sessions. Contributing factors include seasonal changes, end-of-year workload pressures, and national campaigns like R U OK? Day. Employers can better support employees by planning resources ahead of time, and ensuring access during these high-demand periods, promoting a healthier, more engaged workforce.

Tracking when employees access Connect Psych Services helps workplaces refine mental health programs and enables practitioners to be available during peak times. Our data shows a growing spread in session times, with many employees utilising flexible hours beyond the traditional workday. While 1 pm remains popular, 25.79% of sessions now occur between 6am-9am and 5 pm-11 pm, highlighting the need for out of hours support. This trend underlines the importance of offering mental health services that align with employees' real-life schedules, making it easier for them to seek help when they need it most.

**Overall Utilisation rate\***

2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1.92%	2.17%	2.94%	3.24%	3.05%

*\* Connect Psych Services represents true utilisation as the number of employees engaging in counselling*

**Year-on-Year Growth**

Connect Psych Services has seen remarkable year-on-year growth, with an increase in the amount of users ranging from 23% to 130% during the 2021 COVID-19 peak. This reflects the ongoing demand for our innovative, effective service delivery. Rigorous practitioner recruitment and quality control ensure we meet growing demand, affirming our status as a leading workplace mental health provider.



-  **Busiest Months:** August and September consistently see peak EAP utilisation, indicating a predictable demand cycle.
-  **Best time to connect:** The data displays a growing spread in session times, with more employees utilising flexible hours. While 1 pm remains popular, we've seen a significant number of sessions booked between 5 pm and 11 pm.
-  **Ongoing Trend:** The consistency over five years suggests this is an ongoing, year-on-year pattern that employers can use for strategic planning.

## Top reasons for accessing support

Over the past several years, there has been a significant and consistent increase in the reasons Australian employees are seeking support.

Among these, anxiety has shown a steady and alarming increase, doubling in reporting frequency year on year.

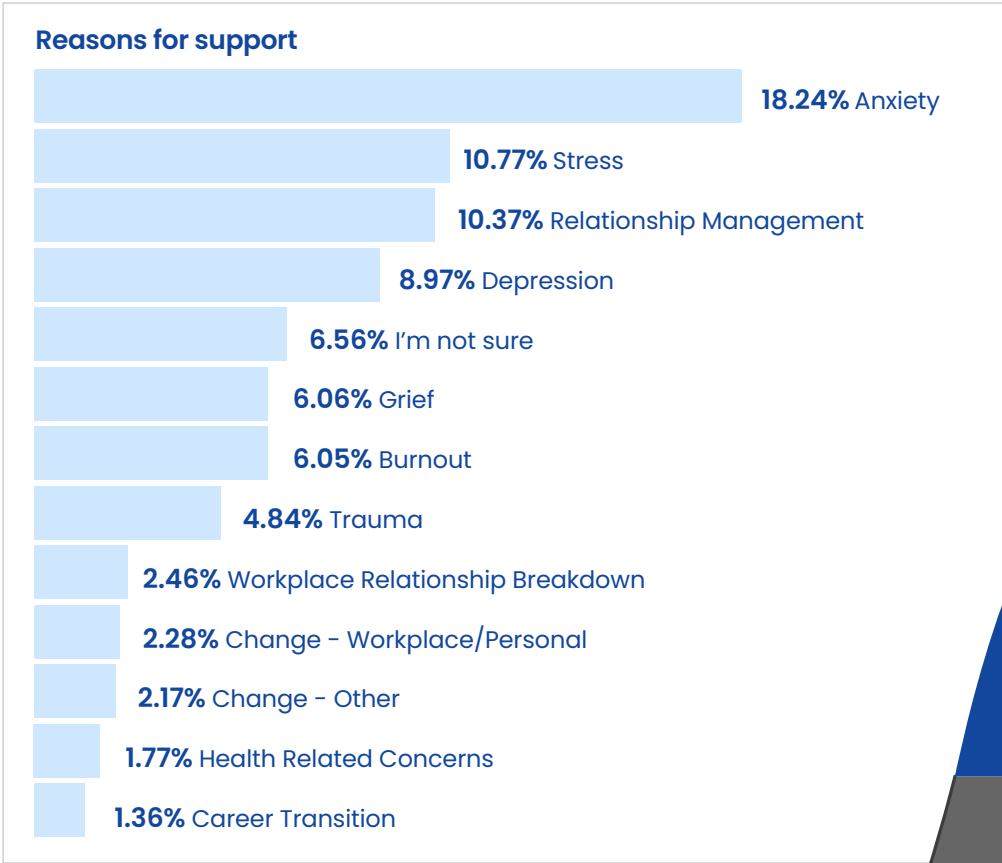
The period from 2022 to 2023 was particularly significant, with burnout and grief experiencing growth in reported cases.

Burnout saw a staggering 589% increase, while grief rose by 175%. This surge aligns with broader national trends in Australian workplaces, where the pressures of post-pandemic recovery, compounded by personal and professional stressors, have amplified psychological challenges. Not surprisingly, this is most evident in the healthcare industry usage reports, where females are reporting higher levels of burnout symptoms than males.

**Burnout** ↑ **589%**

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**Grief** ↑ **175%**



**Burnout:** Burnout, driven by rising job demands and insufficient support, is now widespread, with ABS (2023) reporting a sharp rise in psychological claims.



**Grief:** Grief, amplified by COVID-19's long-term effects, has become a significant workplace issue, as highlighted by ABS (2023).



**Anxiety and Stress:** Anxiety and stress are surging due to shifting work expectations, hybrid models, and job insecurity (ABS, 2023).



**Workplace Dynamics:** Poor workplace relationships and change management highlight the need for psychological safety (Safe Work Australia, 2023).



## Industry Insights

Connect Psych Services supports users across all industries, yet over the past five years, the platform has seen its highest engagement from the **transport, healthcare, education, and retail sectors.**

Transport workers grapple with long hours, demanding schedules, and safety compliance, leading to heightened stress levels.

In healthcare, burnout, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma are common due to the emotionally and physically taxing nature of the work.

Educators face mounting workloads, emotional demands from students and families and job insecurity, all of which strain their mental well-being.

Retail employees, often in customer-facing roles, contend with irregular hours, high-pressure sales environments, and conflict resolution challenges. These industries accentuate the urgent need for accessible, tailored mental health support to address their workforce's distinct and demanding challenges.



## Top 5 reasons for support

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>TRANSPORT</b>					
<b>Im Not Sure</b>		0.00%	0.00%	23.12%	16.37%
<b>Anxiety</b>		19.39%	9.22%	3.76%	10.79%
<b>Relationship Management</b>		6.12%	13.48%	4.30%	9.17%
<b>Depression</b>		2.04%	0.00%	16.13%	6.29%
<b>Workplace Relationship Breakdown</b>		5.10%	8.51%	0.00%	8.09%
<b>RETAIL</b>					
<b>Anxiety</b>	18.18%	29.03%	16.92%	13.30%	24.39%
<b>Relationship Management</b>	21.21%	21.94%	20.90%	12.02%	10.88%
<b>I'm Not Sure</b>	0.00%	0.00%	7.96%	9.01%	9.82%
<b>Depression</b>	12.12%	10.32%	3.48%	9.23%	7.19%
<b>Stress</b>	12.12%	12.90%	1.99%	9.87%	4.21%
<b>HEALTHCARE</b>					
<b>Anxiety</b>	12.58%	13.94%	7.21%	16.79%	16.96%
<b>Stress</b>	20.75%	21.85%	9.61%	5.30%	9.06%
<b>Depression</b>	9.27%	9.37%	6.99%	5.52%	5.81%
<b>Relationship Management</b>	5.74%	7.80%	4.73%	5.48%	6.15%
<b>Burnout</b>	0.88%	0.42%	2.04%	6.02%	11.24%
<b>EDUCATION</b>					
<b>Anxiety</b>	0.00%	2.33%	16.67%	20.00%	18.64%
<b>Stress</b>	5.26%	13.95%	10.00%	4.00%	3.39%
<b>Burnout</b>	0.00%	4.65%	0.00%	14.00%	6.78%
<b>Leadership</b>	26.32%	2.33%	6.67%	6.00%	1.69%
<b>Change - Workplace/Personal</b>	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.34%

## Usage Demographics

### The Rise of Male Usage in Accessing Mental Health Services

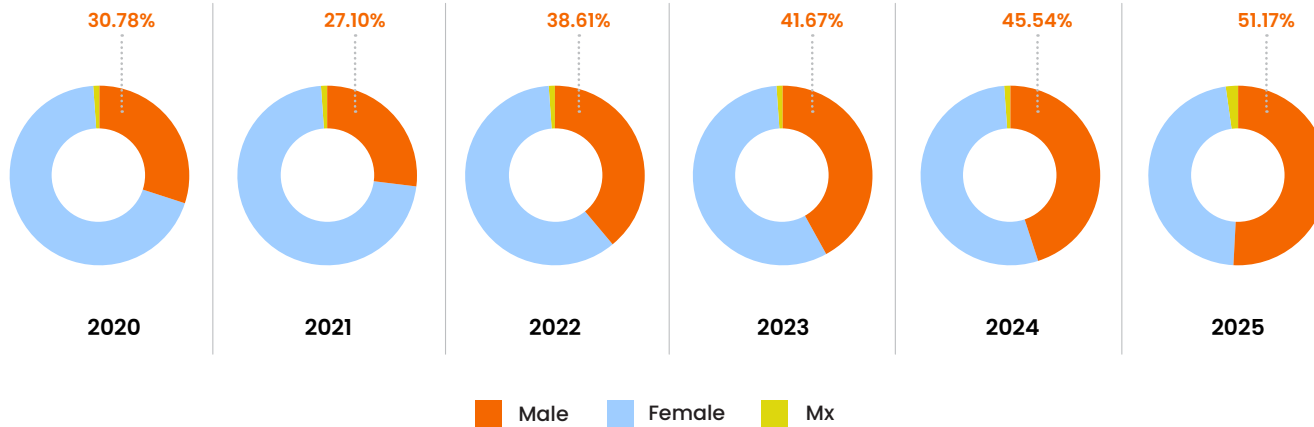
Traditionally, women have been more likely to utilise EAP services, with studies such as the LifeWorks 2021 Annual Report showing female usage rates of approximately 60–70%. Our data aligns with this, reflecting a consistent trend of around 67% female-to-male usage. However, the upward shift in male participation highlights meaningful progress.

Barriers historically preventing men from accessing EAP services include a lack of awareness, concerns about confidentiality, societal norms surrounding masculinity and self-reliance. *Wilkins, D & Kemple, M (2018)*

These challenges have often deterred men from seeking support, particularly in environments where mental health stigma remains prevalent.

At Connect Psych Services, we have tackled these barriers head-on, leveraging the Benign Disinhibition Effect to create an accessible, non-judgemental and humanistic digital platform. This approach encourages men to engage with mental health resources in a way that feels safe, confidential and in control. Additionally, our targeted communication strategies, focus on education and commitment to nurturing supportive workplace cultures have contributed to this positive shift of help seeking in the first instance.

Yearly % increase of users who are male

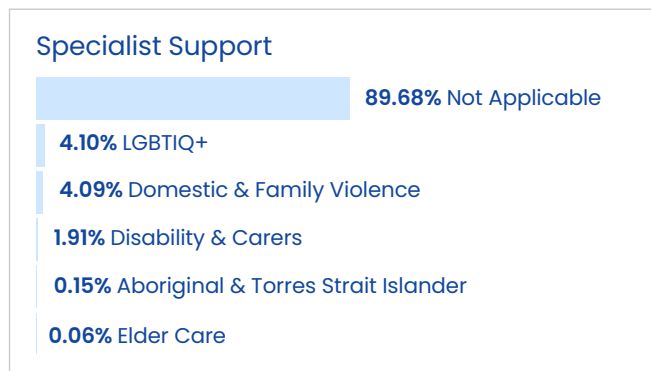


## Specialist Support

The importance of connecting individuals with best-fit practitioners cannot be underestimated, particularly when it comes to addressing diverse and specialised needs. While most employees accessing Connect Psych Services benefit from generalised support, over 10% require specialised assistance tailored to their unique circumstances. These specialised areas include LBQTIQA+ support, elder care, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) support, domestic and family violence counselling and services for individuals with disabilities or for carers.

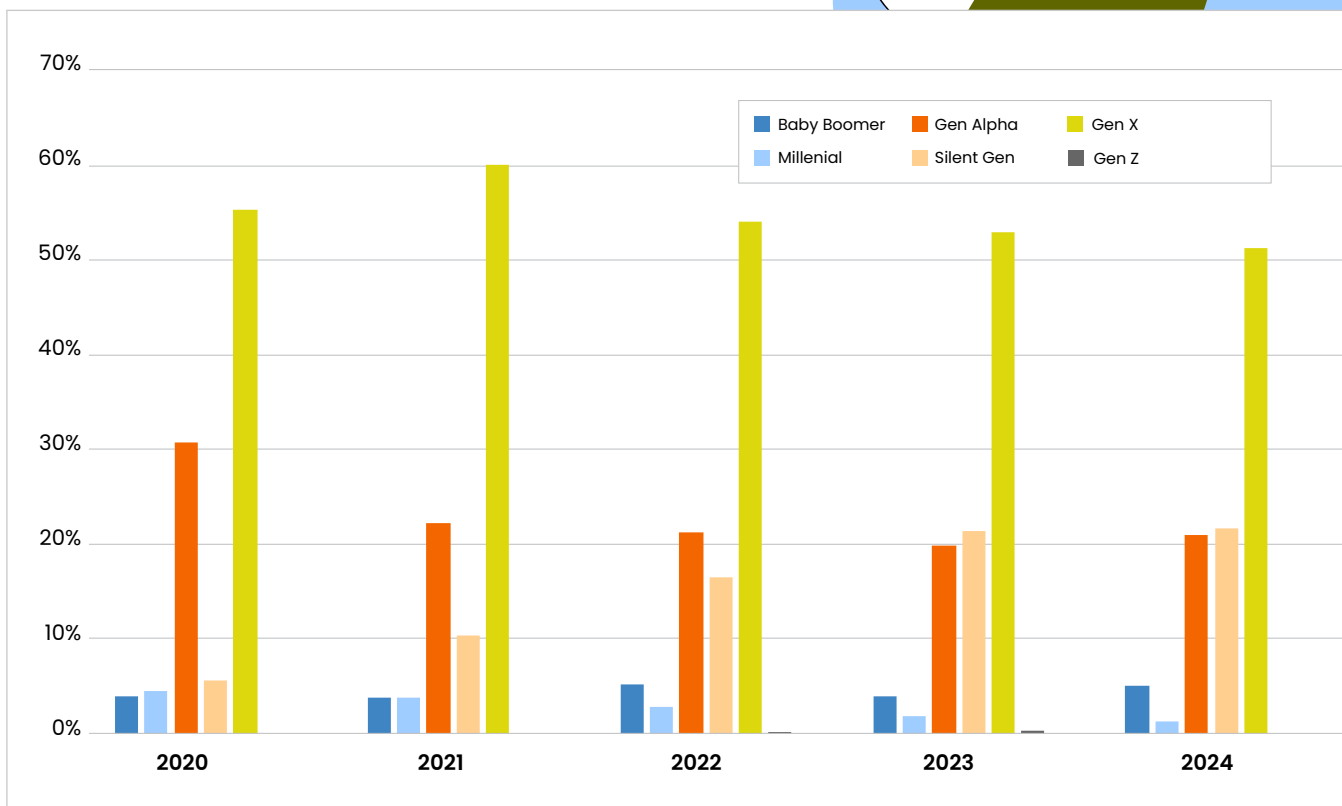
Connect Psych recognises that offering access to practitioners with expertise in these areas is crucial to ensuring effective and meaningful support. Tailored care builds organisational trust and understanding, essential for addressing sensitive and personal challenges and helping navigate complex issues with confidence.

By prioritising a best-fit model, Connect Psych Services ensures that every individual receives the specialised care they need whilst also improving overall well-being across workplaces. This approach reflects a commitment to inclusivity and ensures that no employee's needs are overlooked.



## We need to talk about the Millennial Generation...

Our 5-year trend data shows that Millennials are consistently the highest users of our platform year on year. Usage among Millennials (Gen Y) has seen significant growth, reflecting broader cultural shifts in workplace expectations. This generation increasingly prioritises psychological safety and mental health support as fundamental aspects of a healthy workplace culture. When these expectations are unmet Millennials are more likely to engage with EAPs to seek coping strategies and process these challenges.



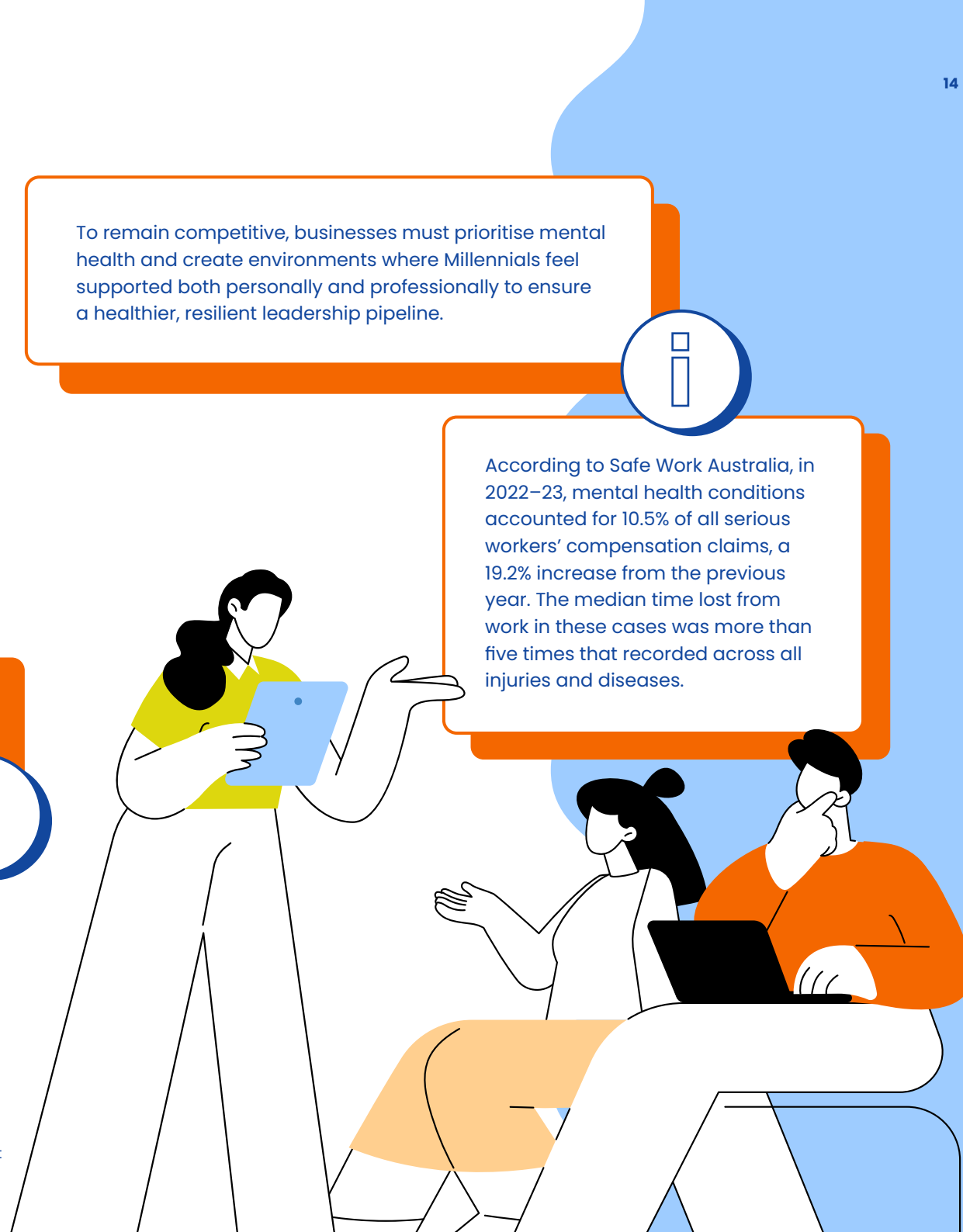
This trend aligns with data showing Millennials as a key demographic for psychological claims in Australia, particularly around issues such as anxiety, stress, and burnout *Twenge, J. M et.al (2019)*. Providing proactive support not only addresses immediate needs but also helps reduce the likelihood of workplace mental health claims and encourages long-term organisational well-being.

Addressing the mental health needs of Millennials in the workplace has become an urgent priority, as this generation now comprises a significant portion of the workforce. With higher rates of psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, and burnout, Millennials are more likely to experience mental health challenges compared to previous generations. Organisations that fail to meet these expectations risk losing top talent, facing disengagement, and experiencing higher turnover rates.

Psychological distress can increase vulnerability to physical injuries, as individuals with high levels of stress and low job control are more likely to make errors.

To remain competitive, businesses must prioritise mental health and create environments where Millennials feel supported both personally and professionally to ensure a healthier, resilient leadership pipeline.

According to Safe Work Australia, in 2022–23, mental health conditions accounted for 10.5% of all serious workers' compensation claims, a 19.2% increase from the previous year. The median time lost from work in these cases was more than five times that recorded across all injuries and diseases.



## Generational Insights

Across generations, the reasons for seeking mental health support reveal nuanced patterns shaped by life stage, workplace dynamics, and societal expectations, as highlighted by Australian research.

### Baby Boomers



#### Top reasons for seeking support:

- Relationship management
- Stress
- Grief

#### When work is the reason for mental health challenges:

- Stress
- Workplace relationship breakdowns
- Exposure to violence and aggression
- Anxiety

### Gen X



#### Top reasons for seeking support:

- Anxiety
- Relationship management
- Stress
- Depression

#### When work is the reason for mental health challenges:

- Workplace relationship breakdowns
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Burnout

### Gen Y (Millennials)



#### Top reasons for seeking support:

- Anxiety
- Stress
- Relationship management
- Depression

#### When work is the reason for mental health challenges:

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Burnout
- Relationship breakdowns

### Gen Z



#### Top reasons for seeking support:

- Anxiety
- Stress
- Depression
- Relationship management

#### When work is the reason for mental health challenges:

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Burnout
- Anger management



## Unpacking the Causes: Work, Personal, or Both?

The top reasons employees have cited for their mental health challenges have remained relatively consistent but show notable shifts influenced by societal and workplace dynamics.

### Personal Challenges

Relationship management consistently showed the most selected reason for seeking support from 2020 to 2024, reflecting the growing need for support in maintaining healthy personal and professional connections. Alongside relationship management, top personal challenges include anxiety, grief, depression and trauma, with grief and trauma showing significant increases since the onset of COVID-19. This rise can be attributed to pandemic-related losses, collective societal stress and the broader emotional toll of global uncertainty. Anxiety and depression remain persistent concerns, often linked to personal and social pressures in an increasingly connected, yet isolating, digital age.



### Workplace Challenges




Within the workplace, the top challenges cited are stress, anxiety, burnout, workplace relationship breakdowns and change management. There has been a marked rise in stress, anxiety, and burnout over recent years, driven by increased workloads, blurred work-life boundaries, and the ongoing effects of hybrid work models. Psychosocial hazards such as workplace relationship issues and difficulties navigating change management have become more prevalent, exacerbated by rapid workplace transformations and evolving organisational demands and evolutions.

### Overlapping Personal and Workplace Factors

Notably, anxiety and stress dominate both personal and workplace contexts, reflecting their pervasive impact across life domains. Burnout and depression also appear frequently, indicating the cumulative effect of unaddressed challenges spilling between work and home life. The “I’m not sure” category highlights a segment of employees struggling to articulate the root causes of their distress, possibly due to the complex interplay between personal and professional stressors.



### Key Insights and Implications

- 
**Grief and Trauma:** The rise in these personal issues can amplify workplace stress and anxiety, particularly when employees lack support systems during tough times.
- 
**Burnout:** Often stemming from prolonged stress, burnout bridges both personal and professional domains, affecting productivity, emotional resilience, and personal relationships.
- 
**Relationship and Change Management:** Tensions in these areas—whether in personal or workplace settings—can compound stress and anxiety, creating a feedback loop that affects overall well-being.

## Personality Alignment

With over 40 years of combined experience as practitioners, the directors of Connect Psych Services understand that truly effective mental health support goes beyond simply matching clients to practitioners based on specialisations or expertise. While skills are undeniably important, the foundation of successful therapy often lies in finding the right personality match. *Human connection* is essential for long-term success, comfort, and genuine understanding between the client and practitioner.

That's why we've taken a proactive approach to understanding not just what our practitioners do, but how they work and interact. Drawing inspiration from the 16PF model, we aligned our practitioners' styles of practice with four distinct personality archetypes. Each practitioner self-identifies with one of these styles, which helps clients choose the approach that best resonates with their current needs and preferences.

Why is this important? Because every client's journey is unique. Some clients seek clear answers and structured guidance, while others simply need to feel heard and understood. The broad scope of counselling means that success doesn't look the same for everyone—it's personal and context-specific.

Understanding these nuances allows us to align not only with individual client needs but also with evolving societal trends. This approach is an integral part of our recruitment process, ensuring we onboard practitioners who are highly skilled but also align with our mission to provide the 'best fit' for each client.

### For employees with Anxiety:

- Millennials, Gen Z, and Gen Alpha prefer "Treat me kind",
- Baby Boomers and Gen X prefer "Empower me to learn".

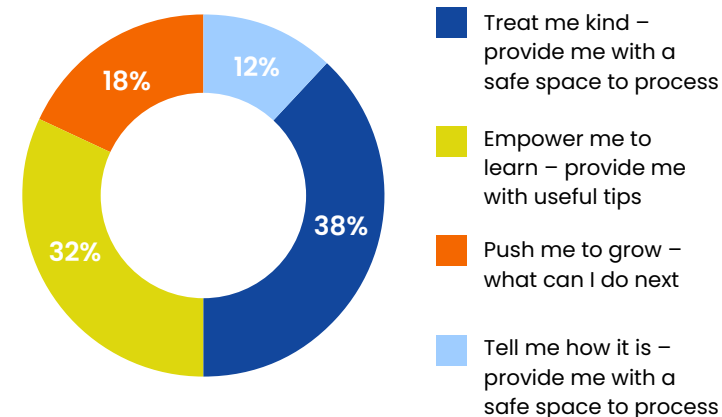
### For employees with Relationship Management:

- Gen Z prefers "Push me to grow",
- Baby Boomers and Gen Z prefer "Empower me to learn",
- Gen Alpha, Gen X and Millennials prefer "Treat me kind".
- It is worth noting that a significant number of respondents across the age groups prefer "Tell me how it is".

### For Employees who are not sure of their reason of support:

- 91% of respondents are Millennials, Gen X, and Gen Z.
- Top preferences are "Empower me to learn" and "Treat me kind".

### Practitioner Personality Alignment



### For employees with Burnout:

- 97% of respondents are Millennials, Gen X, and Gen Z.
- Top preferences are "Empower me to learn" and "Treat me kind", and "Push me to grow"

### For Employees with Stress:

- 79% of respondents belong to Gen Z and Millennials, majority of which prefers "Treat me kind".

### For Employees with Depression:

- 95% of respondents are Millennials, Gen X, and Gen Z.
- While majority prefer "Treat me kind", there are significant preferences to "Empower me to learn", "Push me to grow", and "Tell me how it is".

## Outcomes and Efficacy

### Kessler 10

The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) has been a key tool for measuring general distress for years. Connect Psych Services was the first to integrate screeners like the K10 into a real-time feedback loop, helping practitioners track the impact of therapy. Our approach goes beyond just measuring overall distress—we break it down into four key areas: Negative Affect, Nervousness, Fatigue, and Agitation, which are further grouped into Depression and Anxiety.

This allows us to tailor support and provide targeted interventions instead of one-size-fits-all solutions.

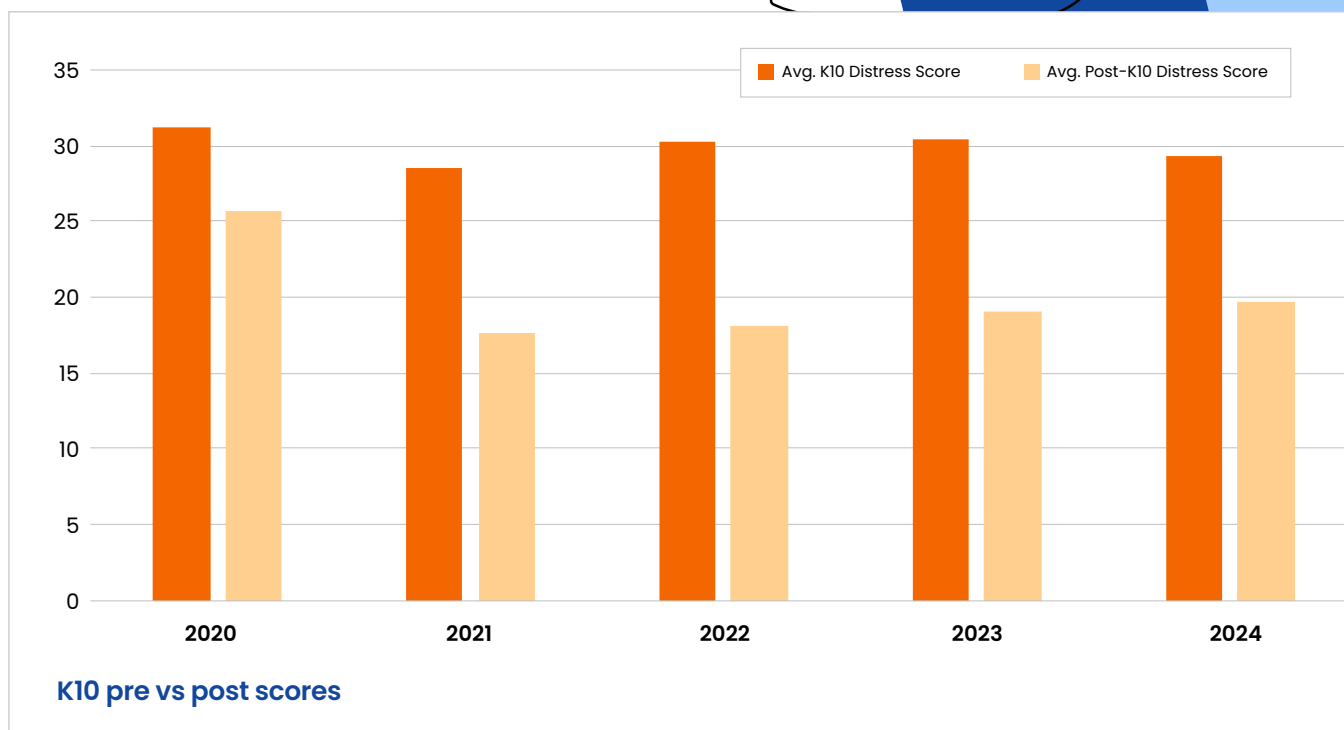
Counselling sessions have consistently demonstrated their effectiveness, showing significant reductions in K10 overall distress, anxiety and depression scores year after year

Interestingly, while males reported experiencing anxiety, Connect Psych's data highlighted a stronger presence of depressive symptoms, particularly around "Negative Affect" and "Fatigue." This insight has proven to be a powerful tool for practitioners, enabling them to explore these patterns with male clients and tailor appropriate and effective interventions.

Breaking down the scores, males reported an overall anxiety rate of 16.03% and depression at 11.89%. However, distress scores derived from the K10 revealed a shift, with anxiety at 10.73% and depression rising to 15.88%. This indicates that depressive symptoms may be more prevalent among male clients than initially reported, reinforcing the importance of nuanced assessments.

The data demonstrates a significant reduction in symptoms for both males and females following intervention. This confirms the expertise of Connect Psych's chosen practitioners, who not only address clients' needs effectively but also select the right tools based on their mental health status.\*

\*NB. To enhance these insights, tools like the GAD-7 and PHQ-9 are available on file for practitioners who require a more in-depth assessment of a client's condition. However, it's important to note that at this stage, this data is not systematically collected.



## Thematic Analysis Trends

We wanted to gain a deeper understanding of our clients because we recognise that the presenting issue is often just the surface of a more complex set of challenges. So, what lies beneath? To our knowledge, this level of exploration has not been systematically collected before. In response, after the first session, our practitioners began gathering additional insights which were then collated into thematic categories.

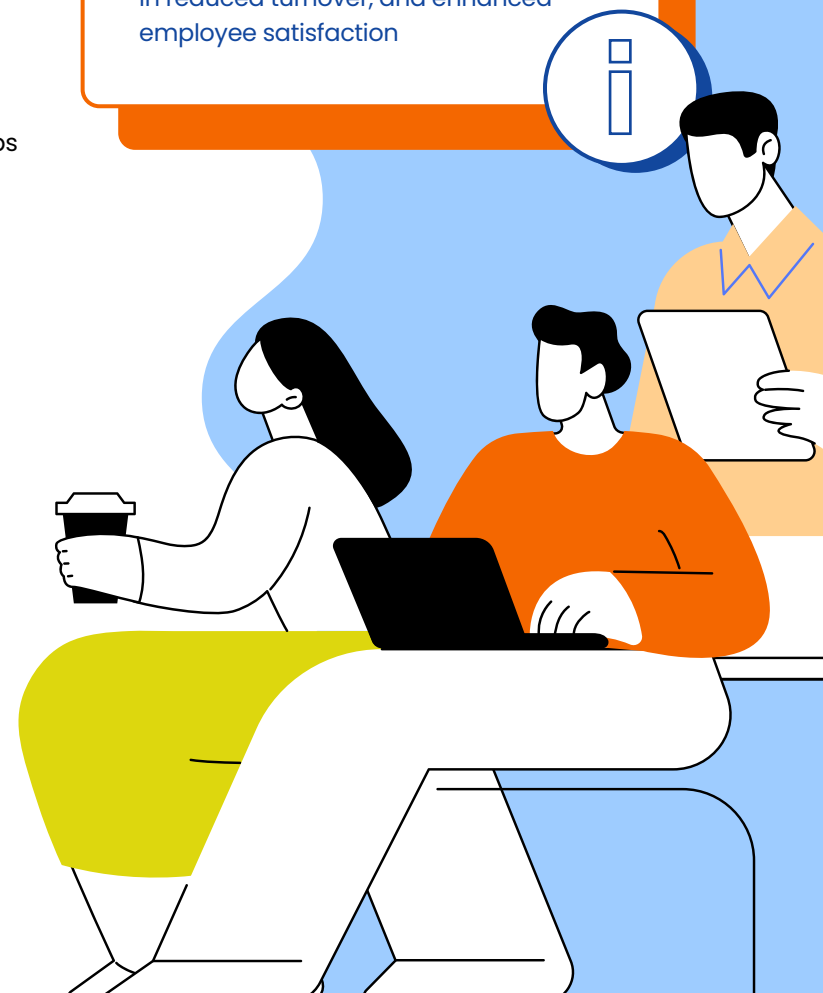
What have we uncovered? These themes have revealed underlying clinical outcomes that were not initially identified by the client. This approach is critical for reducing the risk of “wellbeing washing” – short-term wellbeing initiatives that fail to address the deeper, systemic factors affecting mental health and overall employee wellbeing. By moving beyond generic solutions, we can offer tailored psycho-education pieces for workplaces, informed by a combination of client-reported data and practitioner observations.

This deeper understanding has sparked meaningful conversations with HR professionals, providing them with insights into employee wellbeing not previously seen. These insights enable organisations to future-focus their wellbeing initiatives, ensuring psycho-education is not only relevant but also proactive. Furthermore, by correlating these findings with demographic trends, we help organisations create strategies that align with both current needs and anticipated challenges.

For example, in one organisation, this data-driven approach led to an overhaul of their recruitment strategy.

By combining practitioner expertise with client data, it not only addresses immediate needs but also helps organisations build sustainable, informed wellbeing frameworks for the future.

Through analysing the themes emerging from client sessions, we identified specific stressors tied to onboarding processes and role expectations. Using these insights, we developed targeted wellbeing initiatives, incorporated resilience training into our induction programs, and embedded tailored internet-based wellbeing training. This proactive shift resulted in reduced turnover, and enhanced employee satisfaction.



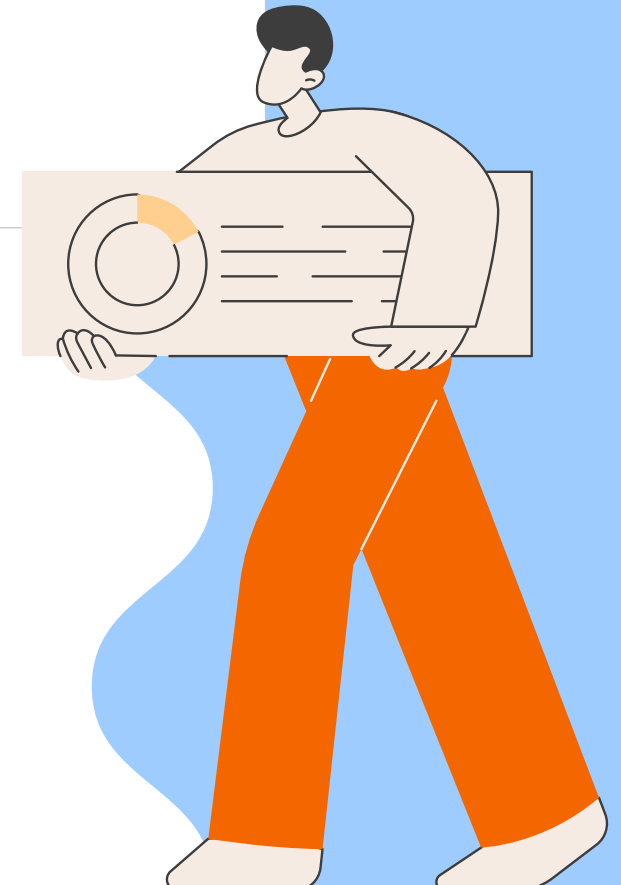
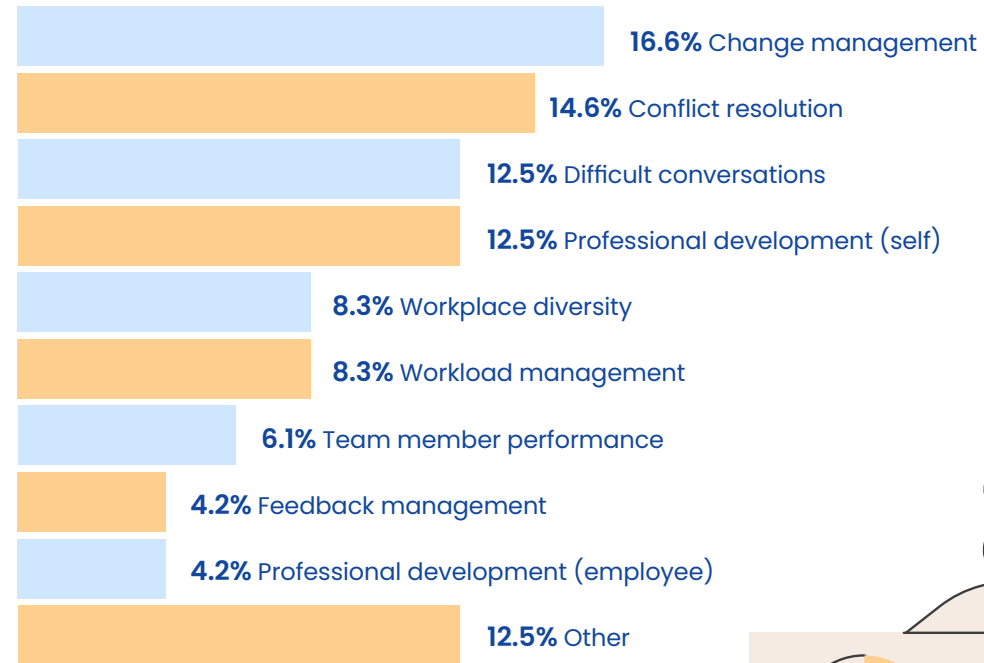
## 'Manager Assist'

Leaders are increasingly expected to act as "accidental counsellors," navigating a multitude of responsibilities under the broad leader umbrella. The past five years have highlighted the pivotal role of people leaders, who are required to lead with empathy, encourage understanding and cultivate a psychologically safe environment. However, this evolving leadership landscape has also placed immense pressure on leaders. Challenges such as managing difficult conversations, resolving conflict, and handling sensitive tasks like redundancies, are just a few of the stressors impacting leaders.

Connect Psych Services has recognised this growing need and risen to the challenge, providing timely and tailored support to leaders through our Manager Assist program. By equipping leaders with the skills to navigate these complexities confidently and compassionately, Connect Psych has empowered them to lead effectively while safeguarding their own well-being, not only alleviating leader stress but educating on developing healthier, more resilient teams.

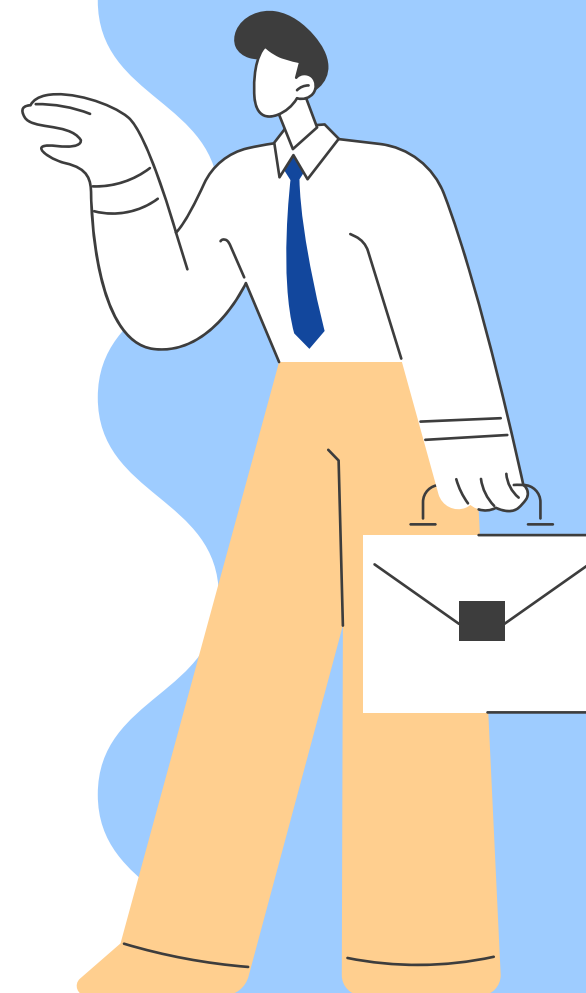
Since the implementation of Manager Assist we have seen a range of areas requiring support, specific to the pressures of leaders.

### Manager Assist Appointments



## Bridging Insights with Best Practices

Emerging evidence demonstrates the value of proactive, targeted interventions in reducing psychological distress and building workplace resilience. Tools such as validated screening assessments, real-time feedback systems, and gender-specific approaches have been shown to enhance the effectiveness of mental health programs. Additionally, multi-faceted strategies that include employee assistance programs (EAPs) play a critical role as both preventers of psychological injuries and advocates for psychological safety. By addressing mental health challenges with precision and timeliness, organisations not only reduce absenteeism and burnout but also create a psychologically safe environment where employees can thrive. These findings provide a strong foundation for the actionable implications and recommendations that follow.



**Table 1. Specific Implications and Research-Based Recommendations**

Topic	Specific Implications	Aligned Research	Recommendations
<b>Broad Clinical Coverage</b>	Connect Psych's ability to address all mental health challenges positions it as an essential partner for workplace wellbeing	The National Mental Health Workforce Strategy (2022–2032) highlights the necessity of integrated mental health services to meet diverse and complex needs	Align with the national framework to deliver clinically informed mental health solutions to address workplace challenges.
<b>Proactive Planning Around Seasonal Trends</b>	Utilisation peaks in August and September reveal predictable trends, allowing organisations to anticipate and plan mental health strategies effectively.	Occupational and Environmental Medicine demonstrates the seasonal variations in mental health-related absences and the impact of pre-emptive interventions.	Develop proactive campaigns, increase practitioner availability, and deliver workshops during peaks to improve and enhance organisational support mechanisms.
<b>Adapting to Flexible Work Patterns</b>	Increased demand for support during non-traditional hours reflects the evolving workplace norms and the need for adaptable service delivery.	Australasian Psychiatry emphasises the growing reliance on digital mental health services that accommodate non-traditional work schedules.	Expand after-hours practitioner availability and promote flexibility in scheduling to align with workplace demands and evolving digital health service trends.
<b>Enhancing Employer Engagement</b>	Data insights on peak utilisation provide a roadmap for aligning workplace mental health initiatives with organisational needs and employee expectations.	Research by Beyond Blue's Heads Up framework and Harvey et al. (2017) emphasise the value of analytics-driven approaches in workplace mental health initiatives	Use analytics to tailor campaigns, adjust workloads during high-demand times, and integrate mental health resources into broader workplace wellbeing strategies.
<b>Increased Male Engagement in Mental Health</b>	Growing male participation in EAP services highlights progress in reducing gender-specific barriers to mental health support but also highlights areas for growth.	Seidler et al. (2016) and Kowalski et al. (2017) advocate for targeted communication and education programs in male-dominated workplaces to normalise help-seeking behaviours.	Develop tailored communication strategies, use endorsements from leadership, and implement male-focused educational programs to further reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking behaviours.
<b>Specialist Support Needs</b>	High demand for specialised services brings attention to the importance of creating inclusive workplace cultures to meet diverse employee needs.	Hinton et al. (2020) emphasises the value of culturally specific and safe mental health services to build trust and engagement among diverse workforce groups.	Design and promote culturally inclusive mental health services and campaigns to demonstrate organisational commitment to equity and inclusion
<b>Millennial Usage and Psychological Safety</b>	Millennials' high utilisation of EAP services reflects their prioritisation of psychological safety and customised mental health solutions.	Deloitte's 2023 Millennial Survey and research by Maslach and Leiter (2016) highlight Millennials' demand for inclusive, flexible, and burnout-focused mental health programs	Embed mental health initiatives into workplace culture and strengthen leadership capabilities to align with Millennials' expectations for workplace wellbeing and flexibility.

Topic	Specific Implications	Aligned Research	Recommendations
<b>Generational Differences in Mental Health</b>	Diverse generational needs require distinct mental health strategies to address unique challenges, stressors, and preferences.	Twenge et al. (2019) and Everly et al. (2013) identify key differences in stressors and mental health needs across generations.	Use generational insights to create tailored programs, such as anxiety management for Gen Z and grief support for Baby Boomers. Leverage visual tools to enhance engagement and outcomes.
<b>Overlap of Personal and Workplace Stressors</b>	Combined stressors highlight the need for interconnected approaches to workplace mental health	Schaufeli et al. (2009) highlights the importance of leadership training in empathy, awareness, and proactive mental health support for overlapping stressors.	Train leaders in empathy, mental health literacy, and proactive intervention techniques to address and mitigate the overlap of personal and workplace stressors effectively.
<b>Seasonal and Temporal Trends in Utilisation</b>	Peaks in mental health service use during specific months highlight the necessity for pre-emptive resource allocation and planning.	Superfriend Indicators of a Thriving Workplace, 2024 Bell et al. (2021) recommend pre-emptive resource allocation and tailored interventions to address high-demand periods effectively	Plan and deliver targeted mental health campaigns, expand service capacity, and schedule workshops during peak utilisation periods to meet employee needs proactively.
<b>Hybrid Work and Mental Health</b>	The blending of personal and professional boundaries in hybrid work models intensifies stress and burnout, requiring innovative mental health strategies.	Allen et al. (2021) and Ford et al. (2022) stress the importance of clear boundaries, leadership guidance, and hybrid-supportive digital resources for mental health.	Introduce virtual counselling, develop hybrid-friendly resources, and ensure leaders set clear expectations to reduce stress and maintain accessibility in hybrid work settings.
<b>Tailored Interventions for Male Clients</b>	Male-specific depressive symptoms such as “Negative Affect” require nuanced and gender-sensitive interventions	Seidler et al. (2016) supports the use of action-oriented and problem-solving therapeutic approaches tailored to male preferences and needs.	Equip practitioners with training in gender-sensitive care, solution-focused strategies, and communication methods that align with male clients’ preferences and needs.
<b>Nuanced Assessments</b>	Discrepancies between self-reported and clinically screened symptoms demonstrate the importance of using robust assessment tools.	Spitzer et al. (2006) recommend validated tools such as the GAD-7 and PHQ-9 for comprehensive and accurate mental health assessments	Standardise the use of evidence-based screening tools like GAD-7 and PHQ-9 across mental health services to improve diagnosis accuracy and inform targeted interventions.
<b>Stigma and Reporting Barriers</b>	Male underreporting of depressive symptoms reflects ongoing societal stigma and expectations around masculinity.	Rochlen et al. (2010) discuss the impact of societal expectations on men’s willingness to seek help and the effectiveness of stigma-reduction initiatives in addressing these barriers.	Promote campaigns focused normalising mental health discussions, and creating workplace environments that encourage men to share and address mental health concerns.

# The Future Focus of Connect Psych Services

As workplace wellbeing evolves, Connect Psych is driving meaningful change through empathetic leadership, risk management, flexible work design, and data-driven strategies, while expanding a commitment to safety and in building psychologically safe teams.

## Connect Psych Services' 2025 Focus: Establishing the Shared Care Model

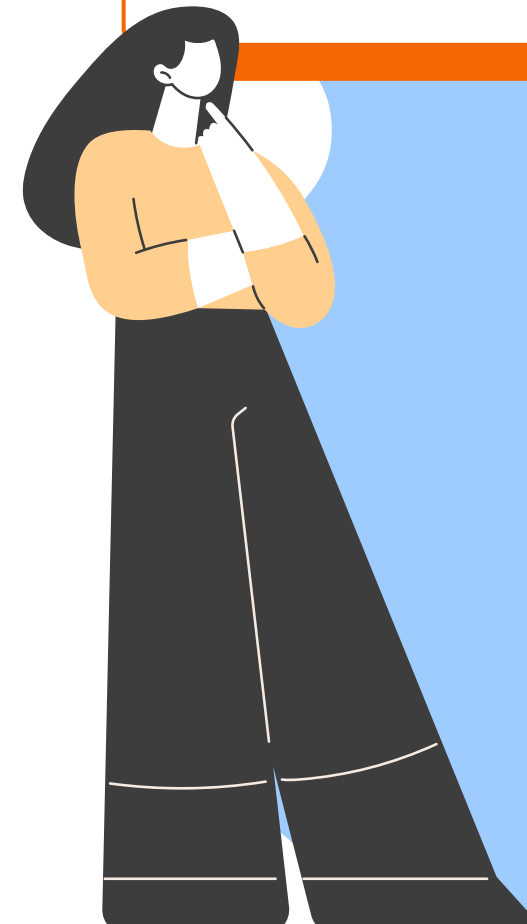
In 2025, Connect Psych Services will focus on embedding the Shared Care Model into organisations to transform workplace wellbeing with innovative and coordinated strategies. Acknowledging that many current mental health initiatives lack depth, Connect Psych will take a holistic approach that addresses the needs of both employees and leaders. The Shared Care Model connects workplace and clinical support, promoting an environment built on empathy, creativity, confidence, safety and trust—key pillars of organisational culture.

This approach not only enhances employee wellbeing but also supports leaders in managing complex situations and mitigating risks, while ensuring alignment with regulatory requirements.

## Humanising Leadership

Leadership development will be a cornerstone of the Shared Care Model, shifting the focus towards empathetic, human-centred strategies. Connect Psych Services will advocate for promoting individuals with strong people-management skills over technical expertise and reducing leaders' administrative burdens to prioritise empathetic engagement. Tailored, practical training will empower leaders to navigate sensitive mental health conversations, ensuring they are equipped to address challenges effectively. By acknowledging that leaders are not immune to mental health challenges, the model emphasises ongoing support systems to reduce stigma and normalise help-seeking behaviours among leadership.

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- **Strong leadership** commitment to mental health.
  - **Systematic approaches** to psychological safety.
  - **Increased focus** on diversity and inclusion as drivers of wellbeing.



## Enhancing Workplace Safety and Risk Management Through New Data Insights

Connect Psych Services is committed to enhancing workplace safety and risk management by introducing new data catchment points to better understand the current psychological climate across workplaces. By integrating this insight, we aim to tailor strategies that prioritise psychological safety alongside physical safety. Through proactive risk assessments, clear no-tolerance policies and innovative integration of EAP services into injury prevention frameworks, Connect Psych Services empower organisations to address workplace stressors, promote inclusivity, and create environments where employees and leaders thrive.

Embedding EAP services directly into psychological injury prevention frameworks represents a forward-thinking approach, aligns mental health initiatives with broader health and safety strategies, supports a culture of care, and accountability allowing organisations to address risks and build accountability.

## Accuracy and visibility in the way Utilisation rates are reported

Utilisation rates across different EAP's vary in their calculations, often over inflating numbers and giving companies numbers that are not a true reflection of usage. Moving forward Connect Psych Services will look to include two different types of utilisation into company reporting. One will continue to monitor actual counselling usage, while a more comprehensive rate will include all EAP touch points, such as attendance to workshops, webinars etc.

## AI-powered, sustainable workforce training

This year, Connect Psych Services is focused on advancing AI-driven resource development and sustainable training that evolves with the dynamic needs of modern workplaces.

By embedding AI tools into psychoeducational resources, we aim to deepen both individual self-awareness and broader organisational mental health literacy. This approach not only enables proactive learning but also plays a key role in reducing stigma, fostering empathetic conversations, and making support more accessible.

In parallel, we are expanding practitioner-led programs that run year-round, designed in response to emerging workplace trends and the evolving needs of both employees and leaders. These programs are twofold: they build ongoing mental fitness and psychological safety across teams, while also acting as proactive “wellness coaching”, supporting high-performing, resilient leadership.

## Expanding Neurodiversity and Intergenerational Support

Connect Psych Services is committed to advancing workplace inclusivity by deepening understanding of neurodiversity and intergenerational needs. By capturing insights into the challenges faced by neurodiverse employees and generationally diverse teams, Connect Psych Services aims to promote alignment and collaboration. Tailored strategies—such as flexible scheduling, sensory-friendly environments, peer support and effective communication—bridges gaps and leverages strengths across the diverse needs of a workforce to drive innovation and cohesion. Bespoke programs for neurodiverse teams and high-stress roles avoid “wellbeing washing” while delivering measurable outcomes through standardised mental health metrics. Enhanced AI tools provide real-time insights, enabling personalised interventions and scalable growth opportunities through expanded practitioner networks and partnerships.



## Summary

This report captures five years of data from over 200 organisations that have partnered with Connect Psych Services, offering a detailed look at workplace wellbeing trends across Australia. The findings highlight the link between psychological distress and workplace hazards, showing how mental health challenges create real risks to safety and productivity. Chronic stress, burnout, and low job control significantly contribute to workplace errors and accidents. Gender-based differences in experiencing distress further demonstrate the need for tailored approaches. By embedding mental health into safety frameworks, organisations can create safer, more supportive environments where both employees and leaders can thrive.

Proactive strategies are vital for reducing distress and building resilience. Connect Psych's 2025 focus on the Shared Care Model is a holistic approach that blends workplace and clinical support to transform wellbeing initiatives. This people-first strategy prioritises psychological safety and equips leaders to manage mental health challenges effectively while cultivating inclusive, flexible work environments. Enhanced leadership development, tailored support for neurodiverse and multigenerational teams, and forward-thinking EAP's, all form part of an interconnected wellbeing plan. These efforts will aim to redefine workplace mental health and create lasting cultures of care and collaboration.

### Supporting the growth of a successful and healthy workplace

For five years, Connect Psych Services has transformed workplace mental health—bridging the gap between compliance and care. Our employee-first model redefines EAPs, ensuring accessible, data-driven support that meets evolving industry needs.

As we move forward, we invite organisations to embed mental health in safety, leadership, and culture. With real-time insights, personalised support, and proactive strategies, we can create resilient workplaces where employees and businesses thrive.

**Want an EAP that who can provide you this level of detail?  
Scan the QR code below:**



## About The Founders Of Connect Psych



### **Dr Natalie Flatt Ph.D**

#### **Co-founder, Psychologist**

Dr Natalie Flatt Ph.D is a psychologist and co-founder of Connect Psych Services. Natalie is from a psychology management background and her passion lies in early identification and intervention. After witnessing firsthand, the reduction in the mental health status of professionals, Natalie moved into corporate wellness to create an innovative solution in Connect Psych, to support employees, leaders, and teams from all industries and to highlight the importance of self-care, stress management, and communication.



### **Anthony McCabe**

#### **Co-Founder, Director**

Anthony McCabe has achieved a Masters of Business Technology, Diploma of Network Engineering and Professional Project Management qualifications whilst working across a range of varied industries. Having had direct management involvement in a number of major societal changing initiatives has provided an incredible amount of learnings that has been incorporated into every aspect which brings a level of diversity & life context to his approach in problem solving and requirement delivery.



### **Sasha Milinkovic**

#### **Co-founder, Clinical Psychotherapist**

Sasha Milinkovic is a clinical psychotherapist and co-founder of Connect Psych Services. Sasha is passionate about supporting wellness programs within businesses and has a humanistic approach when managing individual needs. Having worked within HR and Marketing teams before going into private practice, Sasha saw a significant deficit when it came to educating and encouraging employee self-care.

### **K10 (Kessler Psychological Distress Scale – 10 Item)**

A self-report questionnaire measuring psychological distress based on anxiety and depressive symptoms over the past four weeks. Scores indicate mild, moderate, or severe distress levels.

### **Chronoworking**

An approach to work that aligns tasks and schedules with an individual's natural biological rhythms (chronotypes) to optimise productivity and well-being.

### **GAD-7 (Generalised Anxiety Disorder – 7 Item Scale)**

A screening tool used to assess the severity of generalised anxiety disorder symptoms over the past two weeks. Higher scores indicate greater anxiety severity.

### **PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire – 9 Item)**

A widely used tool to screen for and assess the severity of depression by measuring symptoms based on DSM-5 criteria over the past two weeks.

### **16pf Model (16 Personality Factors Model)**

A personality assessment developed by Raymond Cattell, identifying 16 core traits that describe individual differences in behaviour, used in psychological and workplace settings.

### **Utilisation Figures**

Connect Psych Services EAP Utilisation represents the number of company employees actively engaging in one-on-one counselling services

### **Psychosocial Hazards**

Workplace factors that may negatively impact mental health, such as excessive workload, low job control, poor support, bullying, or job insecurity, potentially leading to stress, burnout, or psychological injury.

### **Benign Online Disinhibition Effect**

Refers to the tendency for people to behave more openly, candidly, or even impulsively online compared to how they might act in face-to-face interactions. This effect arises from factors like anonymity, invisibility, and the lack of immediate consequences in digital environments which can lead to positive outcomes such as increased self-expression or more honest communication.





### **Generational Date Breakdown & Definitions:**

- Baby Boomers (1946–1964) – Grew up in economic prosperity, value hard work, stability, and traditional workplace hierarchies.
- Generation X (1965–1980) – Independent, adaptable, and skeptical of authority, balancing work-life integration.
- Millennials (1981–1996) – Tech-savvy, purpose-driven, value flexibility, and prioritize mental health and work-life balance.
- Generation Z (1997–2012) – Digital natives, highly diverse, socially conscious, and value inclusivity, entrepreneurship, and mental well-being.
- Generation Alpha (2013–Present) – The youngest generation, growing up entirely in a digital and AI-driven world, expected to be highly adaptive and tech-integrated.

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## Connect Psych Services

-  1300 146 386
-  [connect@connectpsychservices.com.au](mailto:connect@connectpsychservices.com.au)
-  [connectpsychservices.com.au](http://connectpsychservices.com.au)
-  [linkedin.com/company/14568038](https://www.linkedin.com/company/14568038)



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