

# 2013 GLOBAL WORKPLACE HEALTH AND WELLNESS REPORT

A GLOBAL ANALYSIS OF HOW  
ORGANISATIONS ARE IMPLEMENTING  
WELLNESS INITIATIVES TO CREATE  
LONG-TERM EMPLOYEE HEALTH  
BEHAVIOUR CHANGE.



## INTRODUCTION

The Global Corporate Challenge® surveyed health and wellness managers from 378 organisations across all continents and a broad spectrum of industries including: Government, FMCG, Banking, Accounting, I.T, Manufacturing, Mining and more to deliver an in-depth analysis of the current state of workplace health and wellness.

Changing health behaviours for the long-term is critical to reducing the developed world's soaring obesity rates, incidence of chronic disease and their fiscal and cultural impact to organisations. This report provides insight on how organisations are approaching long-term health behaviour change and highlights the key successes and challenges these 378 organisations face in the workplace today.

The opinions and experiences shared provide a comprehensive global analysis of workplace health and wellness, with key insights for organisations to consider for their strategy and implementation of wellness initiatives.

## KEY FINDINGS

**Employee health (69%) and engagement and morale (68%) are the key wellness objectives.** Organisations are focusing on the fundamental change drivers and taking the 'bigger picture' approach in order to achieve sustainable success. Objectives such as reduced healthcare costs, increased productivity and reduced absenteeism are secondary drivers, with many seemingly perceived as a by-product of addressing these two primary success factors.

**Organisations need to prioritise levels of fun and engagement in initiative design.** Whilst 99% of organisations report having fun as of medium to high importance for wellness initiatives, only 10% actually report their initiatives achieving very high levels of fun. The ability to create an initiative that is viewed as enjoyable is critical for both increasing participation rates and also supporting completion rates: two prerequisites for achieving long-term behavioural change amongst employees.

**86% of respondents reported lack of time is the main reason employees are not taking part in wellness initiatives.** There is an ever-increasing need to integrate health and wellness initiatives into the daily lives of employees. Creating a strategy that breaks down this barrier (or 'excuse' as some may say) is critical to ensuring high uptake of wellness initiatives.

**Physical inactivity is the number one focus of wellness strategies.** An increasing spotlight on mental health sees stress as the secondary focus; poor nutrition remains the other key health behaviour that wellness initiatives are focused on modifying.

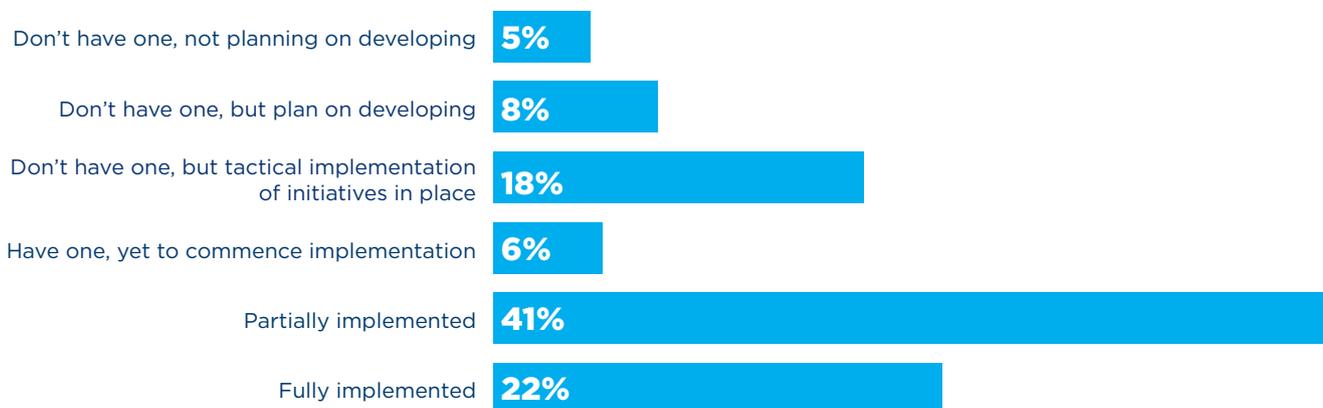
**Less than a quarter of organisations have a fully implemented health and wellness strategy.** 95% of organisations stated that they have or plan to have a fully implemented health and wellness strategy, however only 22% of organisations report having one fully implemented.

## STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Wellness strategy and implementation has received increasing attention in recent years, as the incidence and severity of chronic health risks in the working population continues to rise. In identifying best-practice and emerging trends in workplace wellness, this analysis highlights critical considerations for organisations.

### WELLNESS STRATEGIES ARE STILL UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Q: WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS OF YOUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS STRATEGY?



**Less than a quarter of organisations have a fully implemented wellness strategy.** 22% of organisations have a fully implemented strategy and 5% of organisations report having no intention of developing a wellness strategy at all.

**Large organisations are more likely to have a fully implemented wellness strategy.** 26% of organisations with >500 employees have a fully implemented wellness strategy. Smaller organisations with <100 employees are much slower on the uptake, with only 10% having a wellness strategy currently in place.

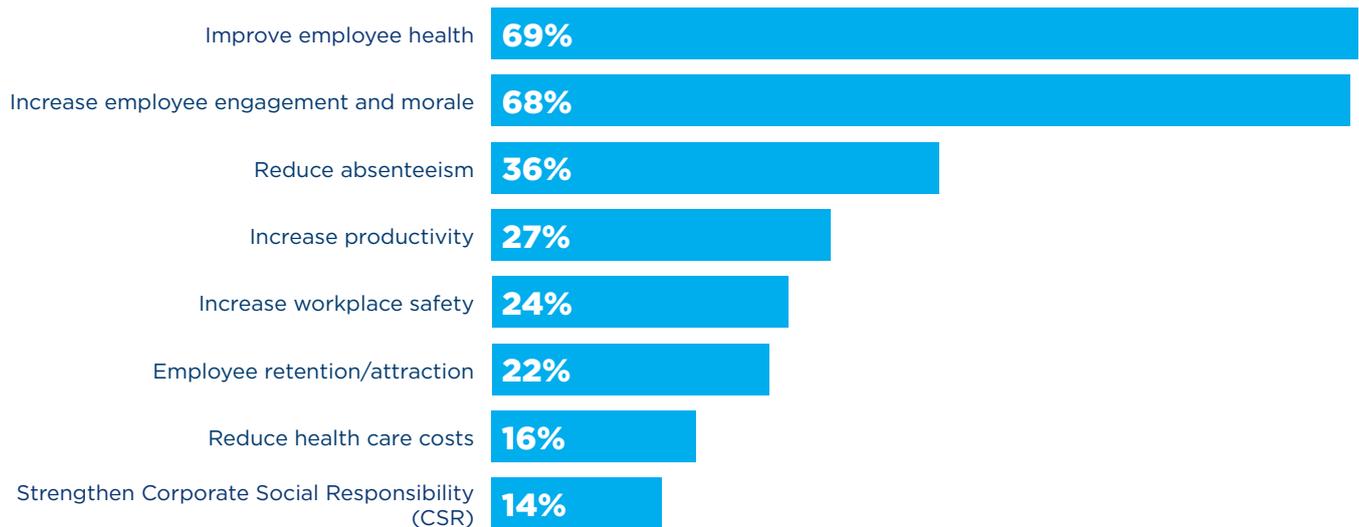
**37% of organisations have no formal strategy in place.** Two thirds of organisations plan to implement a wellness strategy but are yet to do so. With a considerable number (18%) delivering tactical implementations without a formal strategy, time and resource pose as barriers to full implementation - despite best intentions.

### SO WHAT?

Businesses are fast identifying the need to prioritise health and wellness. A formal strategy is on the agenda, however only 22% are already there - is your business amongst them?

## OVERALL HEALTH AND ENGAGEMENT ARE THE KEY FOCUS

Q: WHAT ARE THE KEY OBJECTIVES OF YOUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS STRATEGY? (YOU MAY SELECT MULTIPLE OBJECTIVES)



**Improving overall employee health is a main goal (69%).** A positive sign that organisations are not looking for superficial quick-fixes from their wellness initiatives. Addressing the primary issue of overall wellness poses the best opportunity to change health behaviours for the long term.

**Engagement is key.** Engagement is identified as the other clear objective (68%), just as critical as overall health. Directly correlated with employee performance, productivity and staff retention, employee engagement levels can powerfully impact a host of fundamental financial and cultural indicators of business health. As such, attention to stimulating and maintaining positive engagement levels effectively dovetails into core business objectives and bottom line.

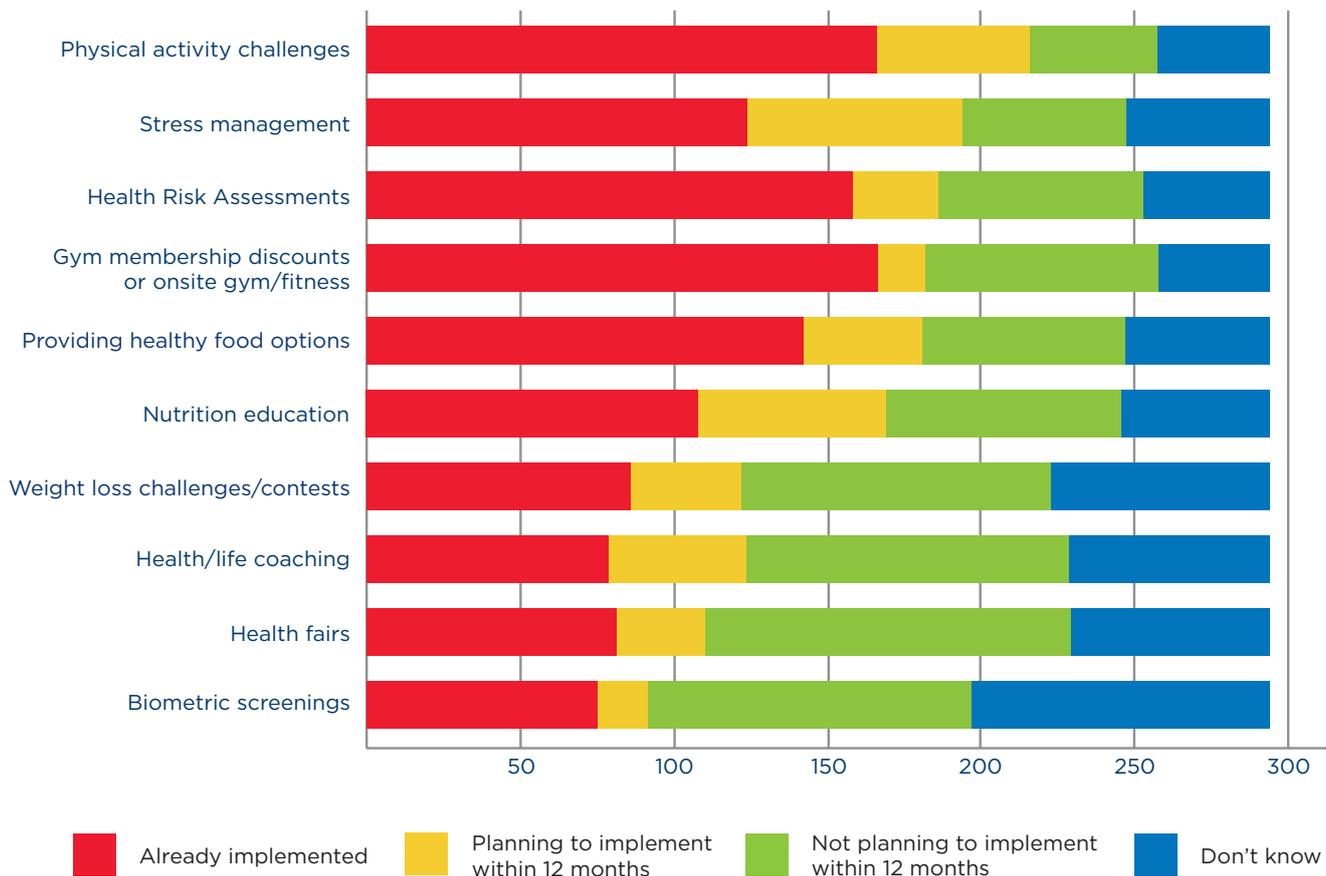
**Addressing wellness at its core.** Other benefits of wellness initiatives - such as increased productivity, retention, workplace safety, CSR visibility and reduced absenteeism - are clearly secondary wellness objectives, perceived as a by-product of successful employee health improvement and their workplace engagement.

## SO WHAT?

Clearly, companies recognise the vast and measurable workplace benefits which come from safeguarding and securing the health and wellness of its workforce. Rather than focusing only on specific, bottom-line returns, data suggest that companies have adopted a holistic appreciation of employee health and wellness as a strong foundation for overall business productivity and performance.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS NUMBER ONE

Q: WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS OF EACH OF THE BELOW WELLNESS INITIATIVES?



**Physical activity challenges, gym memberships, health risk assessments and healthy food options are the top initiatives implemented.** Physical activity is a primary target for wellness strategies. Many wellness strategies are built on the foundation of physical activity, with knock-on benefits such as improved mental health a by-product along with the obvious physical health benefits.

**Stress management, nutrition education and life coaching on the rise.** These are the three initiatives organisations are looking to implement for the first time in the next 12 months, in line with an increased global focus on employee mental health and the need to extend beyond addressing physical inactivity alone.

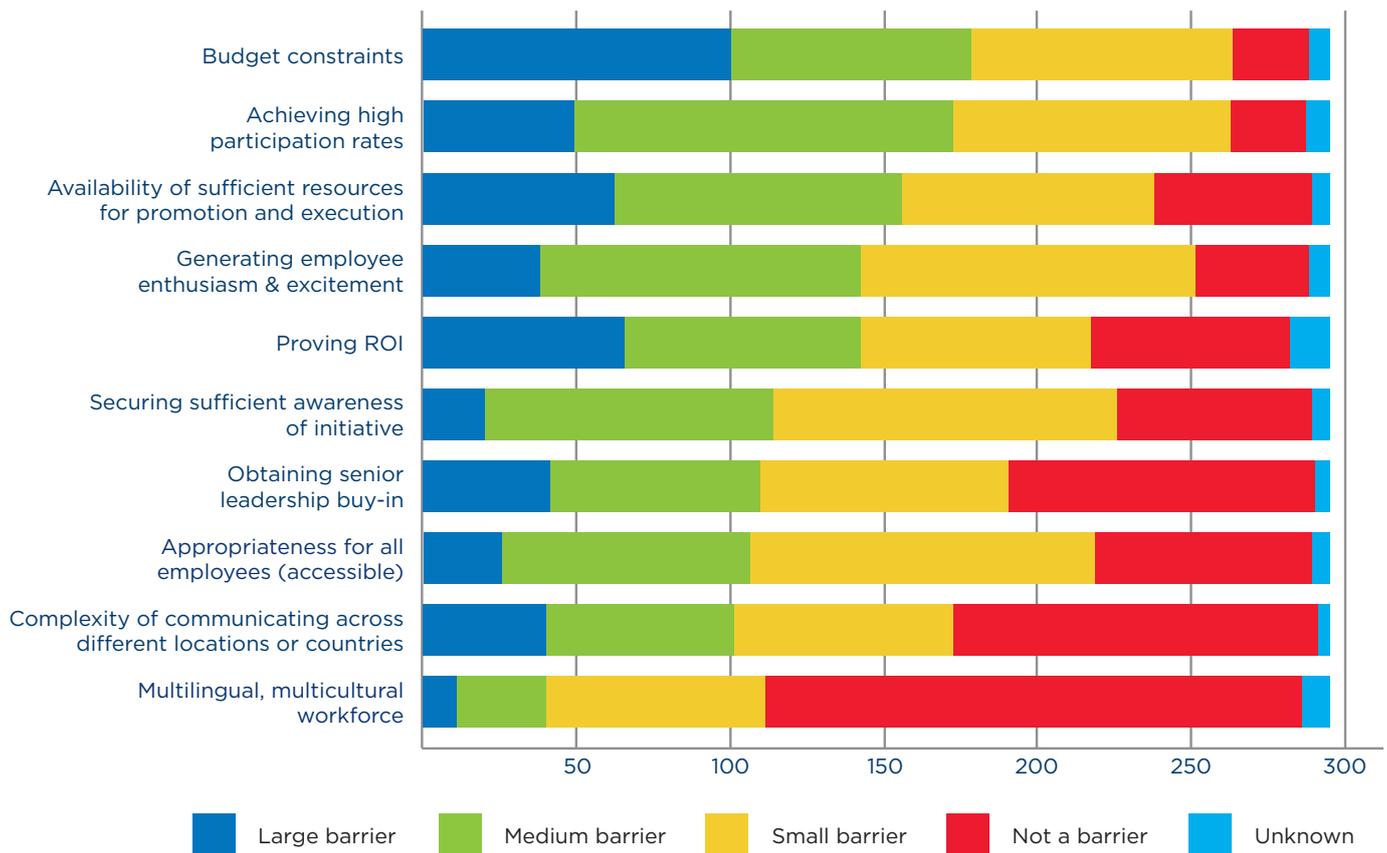
**Biometric screenings harbour the most uncertainty.** Considered one of the more complex wellness initiatives to roll out, biometric screenings are least implemented and hold the least certainty.

## SO WHAT?

Simply measuring the problem no longer stacks up. Globally, health and wellness intervention is being prioritised over health-risk measurement with organisations enabling their employees to take charge of their own health, through offering initiatives that require employees to take an active role, such as physical activity and nutrition programs.

## BUDGET CONSTRAINTS PREVALENT IN WELLNESS

Q: WITH REGARD TO IMPLEMENTING WELLNESS INITIATIVES, HOW SIGNIFICANT ARE EACH OF THE FOLLOWING BARRIERS?



**Budgets prove the biggest hurdle.** Budget constraints (followed closely by sufficient resources) is the clear road block for wellness initiatives. Organisations with a fully implemented wellness strategy are 17% less likely to state budget constraints as a barrier.

**Low participation rates and lack of fun are concerns for wellness initiatives.** The bulk of organisations consider the achievement of high participation rates as a medium or large barrier. The ability to generate high participation rates is one of wellness’s top priorities and it appears that organisations remain unclear on effective ways to do so.

## SO WHAT?

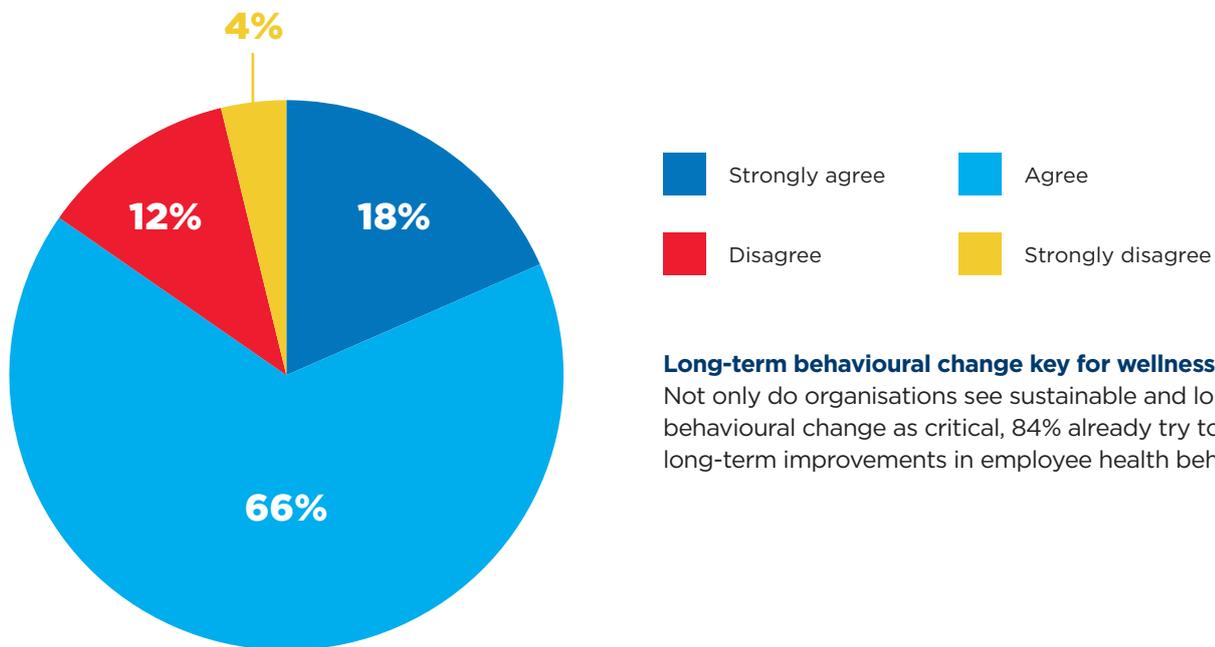
Offering wellness initiatives that are fun and engaging with a broad appeal increases program uptake. Resource allocation is often a barrier, demanding that vendors offer turn-key solutions that include full promotional and operational support to help relieve this burden. Are your initiatives broadly accessible and appealing? And in the case of vendor programs: Is promotional and operational support built in and comprehensive?

## LONG-TERM BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

Wellness initiatives are designed to either identify health risks or to change lifestyle behaviours for the better - and ideally - for the long term. When habits formed are maintained beyond designated initiative duration, organisations and employees both reap the most benefit from these new health behaviours.

### BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE IS CONSIDERED CRITICAL

Q: MY ORGANISATION SEEKS TO CREATE LONG-TERM BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE IN EMPLOYEES:



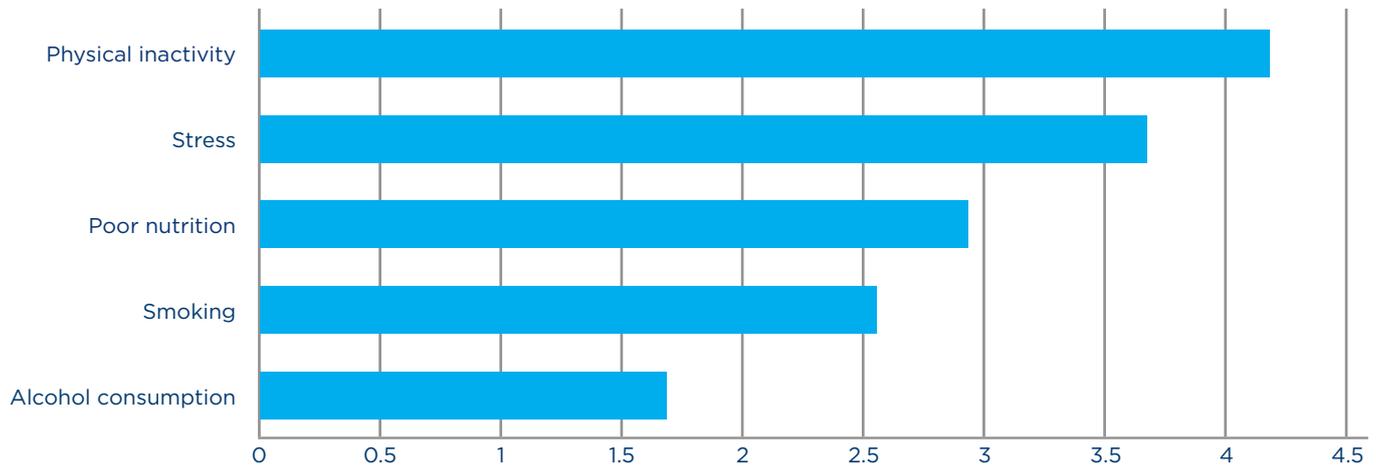
**Long-term behavioural change key for wellness strategy.** Not only do organisations see sustainable and long-term behavioural change as critical, 84% already try to create long-term improvements in employee health behaviours.

### SO WHAT?

If you're not focusing on long-term behaviour change, you're in the minority. Businesses are quickly shifting short-term 'quick fixes' for long-term outcomes in wellness strategies - for better wellness success.

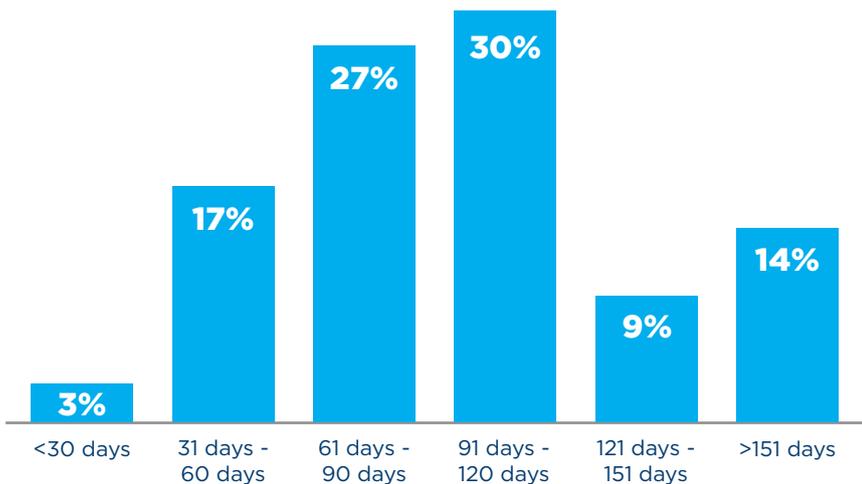
## PHYSICAL INACTIVITY AND STRESS ARE PRIORITIES FOR WELLNESS STRATEGIES

Q: PLEASE RANK (5 BEING THE HIGHEST) WHICH EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOURS YOUR WELLNESS STRATEGY IS FOCUSED ON MODIFYING:



**Physical inactivity is the number one priority of wellness strategies.** Rather than pledging to overhaul an entire lifestyle (as per most New Year’s Resolutions), tackling one change and working toward one simple, accessible goal at a time will facilitate steady progress and guard against failure. Successful formation of this single, impactful ‘keystone’ habit will create a positive ripple effect which supports uptake of additional new habits and long-term behaviours.

Q: HOW LONG DO YOU THINK IT TAKES TO CHANGE A LIFESTYLE BEHAVIOUR FOR THE LONG-TERM?



**It takes time to change health behaviours.** 57% of health and wellness decision makers think it takes between 61 and 120 days to change an employee’s health behaviours. Wellness initiatives need to run long enough to give employees the best chance at creating sustainable behavioural change.

## SO WHAT?

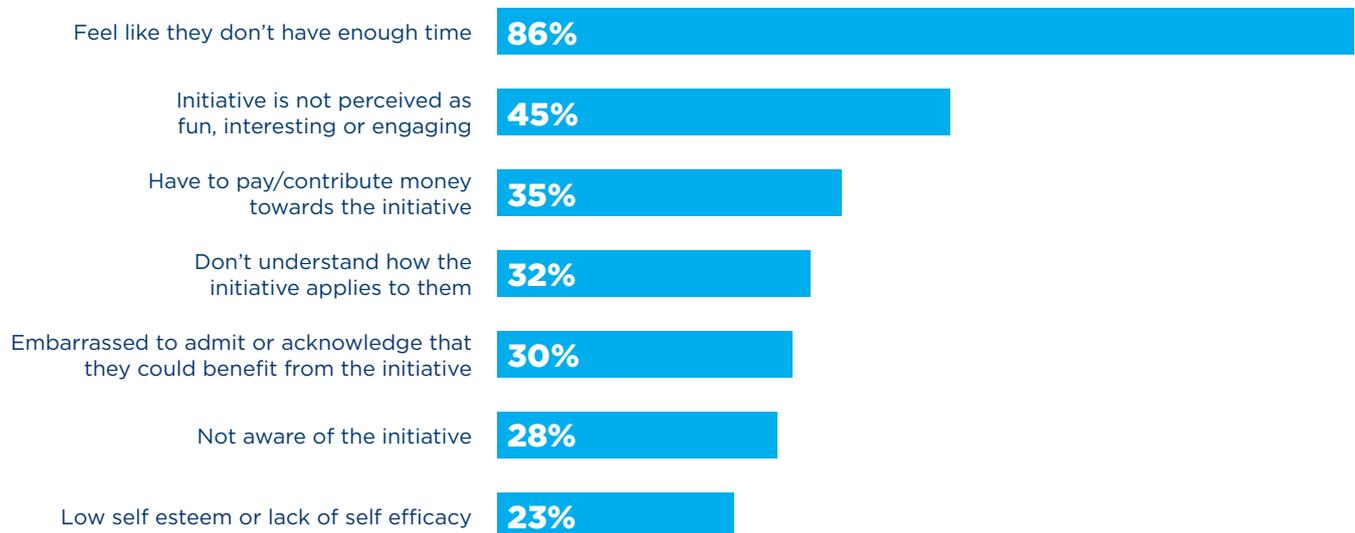
Behavioural changes take time to achieve. Progressive organisations recognise this and set their expectations accordingly. Are your initiatives long enough to ensure your employees have effectively formed new healthy habits?

## PARTICIPATION RATES

Constantly seen as a key hurdle of wellness initiatives, high participation is one of the most commonly-used key performance indicators for the measurement of a wellness initiative. Only 8% of survey respondents feel that participation rates are not a barrier for their wellness initiatives, 92% reported otherwise. This analysis delves deeper into the key challenges this overwhelming majority is seeking to overcome.

### EMPLOYEES DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO PARTICIPATE

Q: IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS FOR EMPLOYEES NOT PARTICIPATING?



**Employees think they are too time-poor.** Lack of time is the stand-out barrier, from employees' perspectives. Wellness initiatives need to be accessible to employees, aligned with an organisation's culture and integrated into employees' daily routines - both in and out of the workplace.

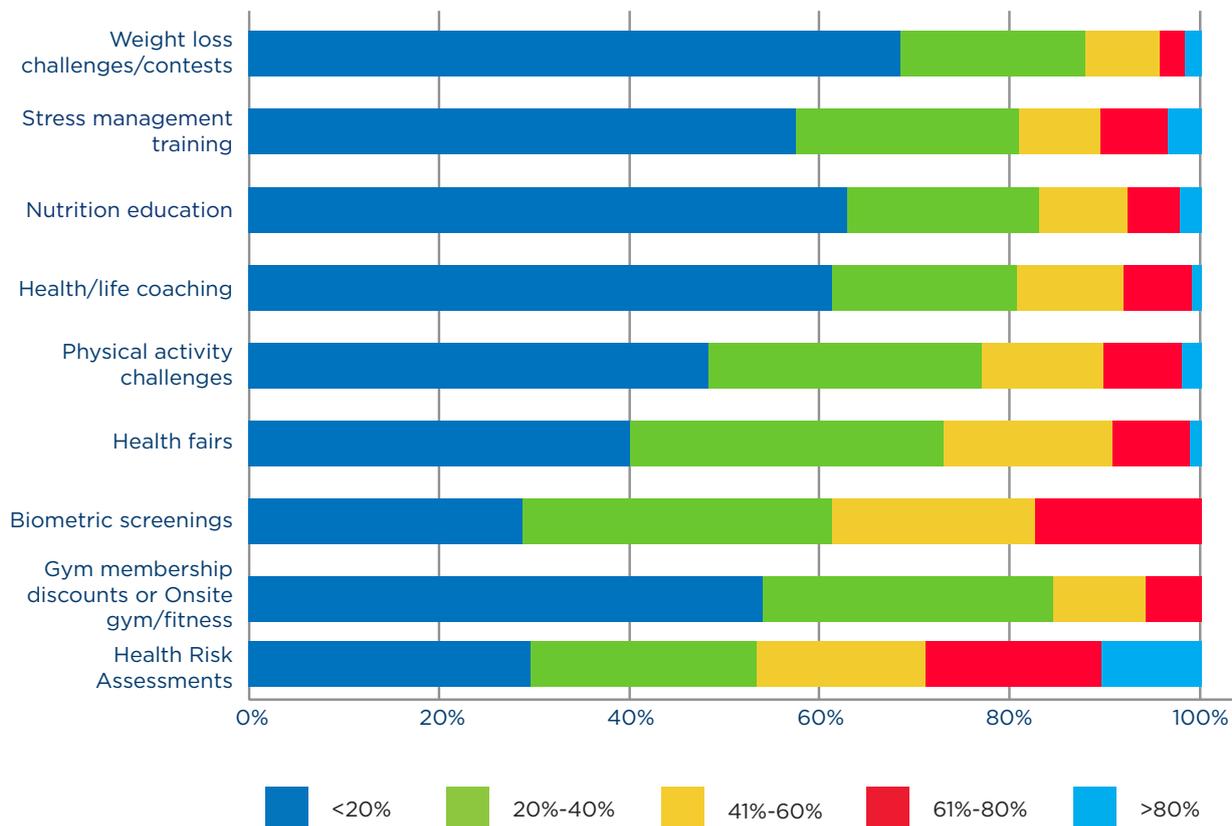
**Don't underestimate the power of fun.** Engagement levels are directly linked with employees' perceived level of fun or interest in wellness initiatives. An initiative that is perceived as fun vastly increases the likelihood of employee uptake.

## SO WHAT?

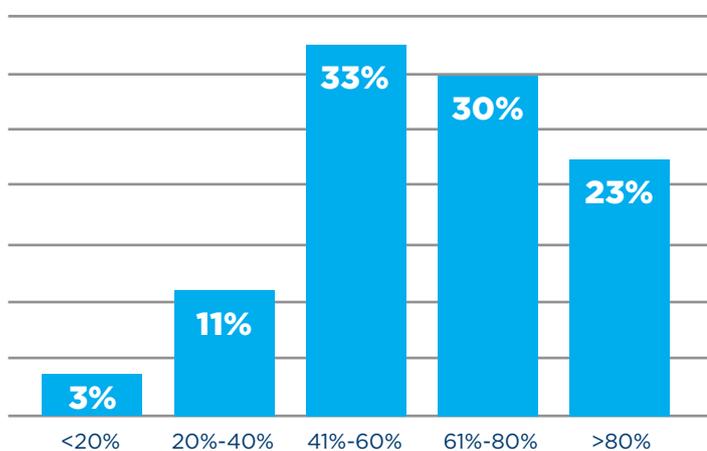
Effective wellness initiatives can circumvent typical employee participation barriers - lack of time, lack of interest, lack of inclination to contribute financially - with a program design that is flexible, fun and easily incorporated into daily life. Namely, a program which engages employee interest and empowers commitment.

## ORGANISATIONS SEEK 60% PARTICIPATION RATES

Q: WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT PARTICIPATION RATES FOR THE FOLLOWING INITIATIVES?



Q: WHAT WOULD BE YOUR IDEAL LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION ACROSS ALL WELLNESS INITIATIVES?



**Participations rates below 20% are most common.**

Most wellness initiatives are achieving below 20% participation rates. Organisations are getting the highest participation in health risk assessments, biometric screenings, health fairs and physical activity challenges.

**Weight loss challenges have lowest uptake.**

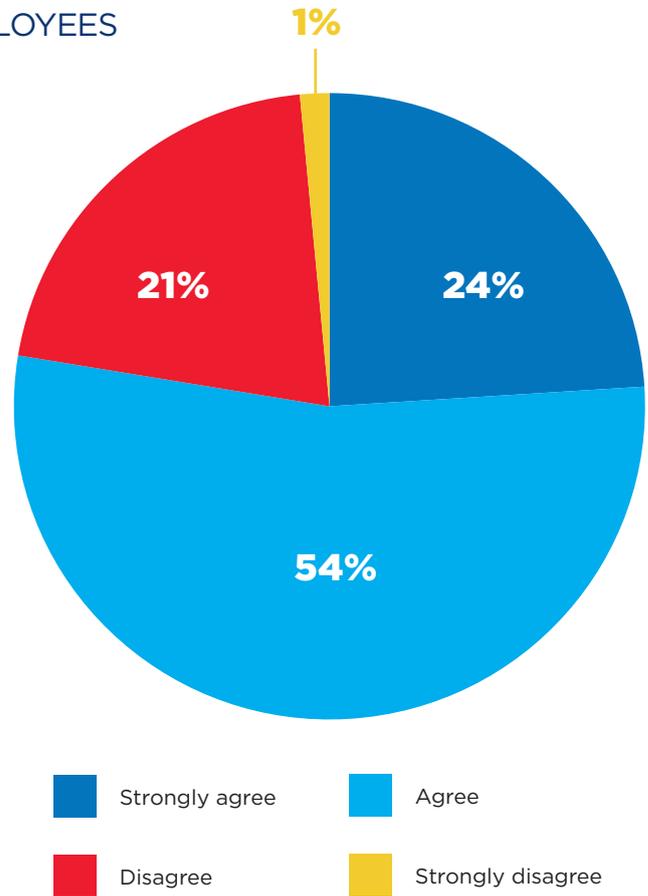
Despite the majority of employees stating some level of weight loss to be an important health goal for them, employees are typically reluctant to publicly acknowledge their weight and take part in or be associated with weight loss challenges. To overcome this, organisations should consider more employee-friendly language in promoting the initiative, or run the risk of alienating employees and impeding participation levels.

**60% participation is the sweet spot.** Globally, 60% is the mean ideal participation rate percentage. Organisations see this as a realistic target to aim for.

## HEALTHY EMPLOYEES ARE GETTING HEALTHIER

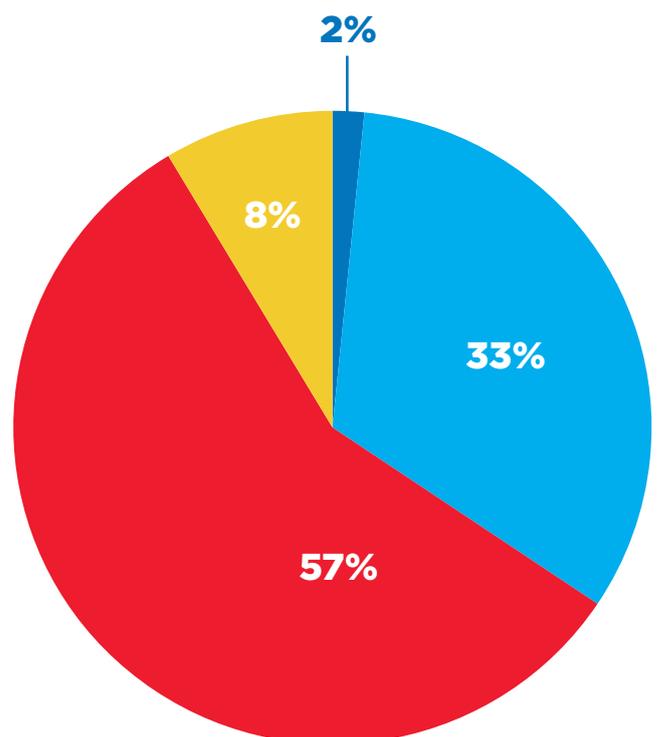
Q: EMPLOYEES WHO ARE LEAST LIKELY TO TAKE PART IN OUR WELLNESS INITIATIVES ARE THE EMPLOYEES WITH THE HIGHEST HEALTH RISKS:

**Less than one quarter of organisations say they're attracting the right employees.** Whilst participation rates are a good indicator of wellness initiative success, engaging the employees with the highest health risk is proven to have the greatest impact on initiative effectiveness. With 78% of managers admitting that this is an issue, attracting the high-risk employee to a wellness initiative becomes as imperative (if not more) as overall participation rates.



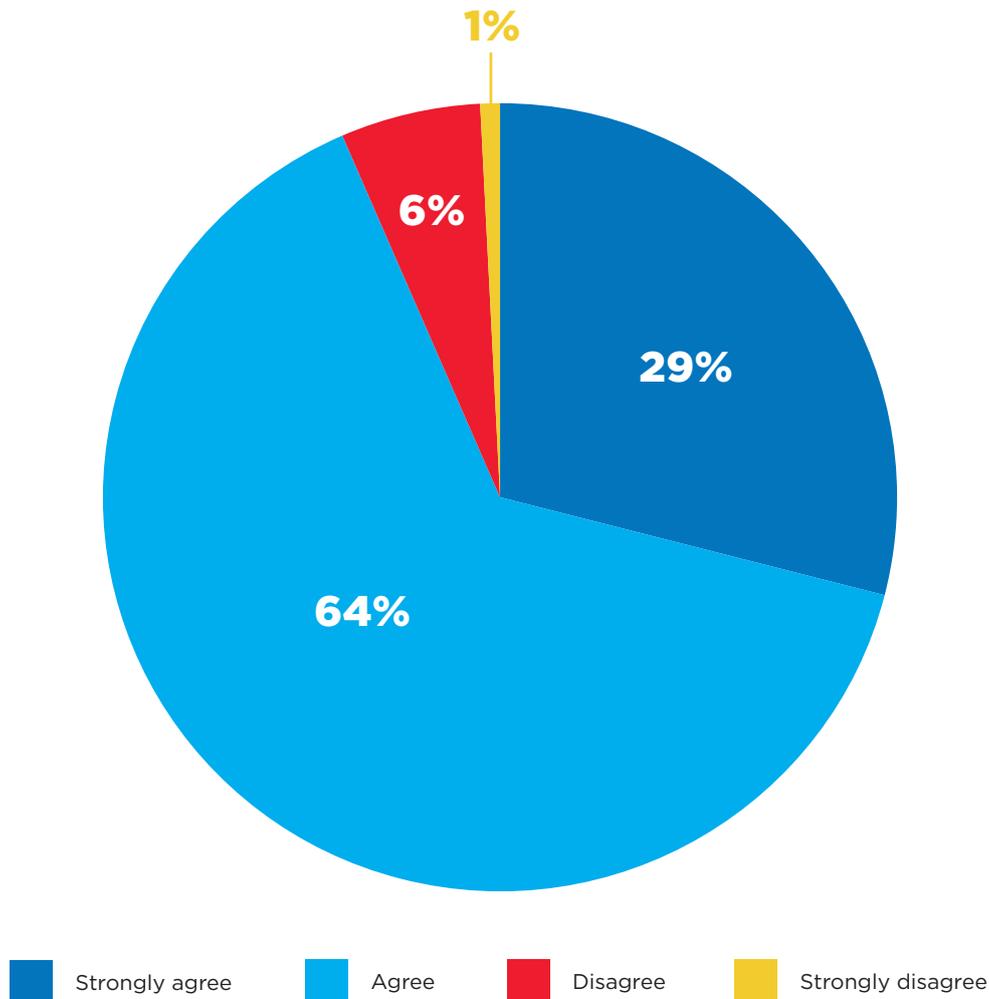
Q: OUR WELLNESS INITIATIVES TARGET EMPLOYEES WITH HIGH HEALTH RISKS:

**65% of initiatives don't target those with greater health risk.** With only 35% of organisations stating they target employees with high health risk, it's clear why only a quarter feel they are attracting these employees. Tailored communication, tone and language are critical when promoting wellness initiatives in order to engage these (often sceptical) employees who are at most risk and cost to organisations. Promoting initiatives as fun and accessible is even more critical for employees with higher risk.



## SAME EMPLOYEES, TIME AND AGAIN

Q: IT IS MOSTLY THE SAME EMPLOYEES WHO PARTICIPATE TIME AND AGAIN IN OUR WELLNESS INITIATIVES:



**93% of organisations report attracting the same employees time and again.** Likely, these employees are the healthiest (generally with low absenteeism levels and high productivity) - representing the least risk for organisations.

Making wellness initiatives accessible and appealing to all employees increases the ability to attract employees across the health-risk spectrum. Wellness strategies can do this by breaking down the main employee barriers: lack of time and “low fun” perceptions.

## SO WHAT?

Unhealthy employees are typically the hardest to engage in wellness initiatives, but also the most critical. For maximum health and business returns, wellness initiatives must engage these reluctant workers. It's not what you say; it's how you say it - being on your feet for 80 minutes throughout an entire day is much less daunting than spending 45 minutes on a cross trainer - the language you use goes a long way to breaking down employee barriers.

## FUN

The argument for fun is a simple one when it comes to wellness initiatives. Employees are more likely to want to join an initiative that's fun. It takes time to change lifestyle behaviours for the long term; therefore enjoyment goes a long way towards supporting strong completion rates (another key performance indicator for wellness initiative success).

### THERE'S NO WELLNESS WITHOUT FUN

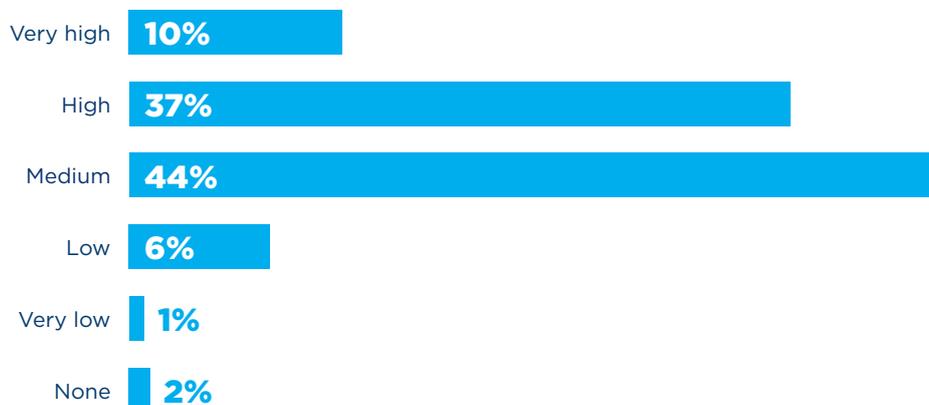
Q: HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING FUN IN YOUR WELLNESS INITIATIVES?



**Fun is in the 1st percentile.** 99% of organisations rate the importance of having fun at medium or higher in regards to their wellness initiatives.

**Organisations need to prioritise levels of fun in initiative design.** Whilst 37% of organisations report having fun as a very high importance for wellness initiatives, only 10% actually report their initiatives achieving very high levels of fun. Wellness initiatives can often be perceived as dull - and many inherently are. The ability to create an initiative that is viewed as fun is critical for both increasing participation rates and also supporting completion rates: two prerequisites for achieving long-term behavioural change amongst employees.

Q: HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE LEVEL OF FUN YOUR EMPLOYEES HAVE BY PARTICIPATING IN YOUR WELLNESS INITIATIVES?



## CONCLUSION

Organisations are tackling wellness within the workplace at its very core - focusing on empowering long-term, healthy behaviour change across wellness initiatives - predominantly comprising physical activity, health risk assessments, stress management and nutritional education.

Whilst intentions are earnest, lack of fully-implemented strategies and barriers such as budgets and time-poor employees pose the biggest threats to wellness success globally.

Designing a wellness strategy that targets employees with the highest health risk, over a duration long enough to ensure employees have formed new healthy habits and incorporates fun present as key opportunities to increase participation rates, completion rates and empower long-term behavioural change and their sustainable returns to the workplace.

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## ABOUT GCC

The Global Corporate Challenge® (GCC) is a leading, global workplace wellness provider. To date, the behavioural change program has delivered scientifically proven results to over 3,400 of the world's leading organisations globally. Results include improved employee physical and mental health, enhanced productivity, reduced absenteeism and a stronger culture of resilience. To learn more, visit [www.gettheworldmoving.com](http://www.gettheworldmoving.com).



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