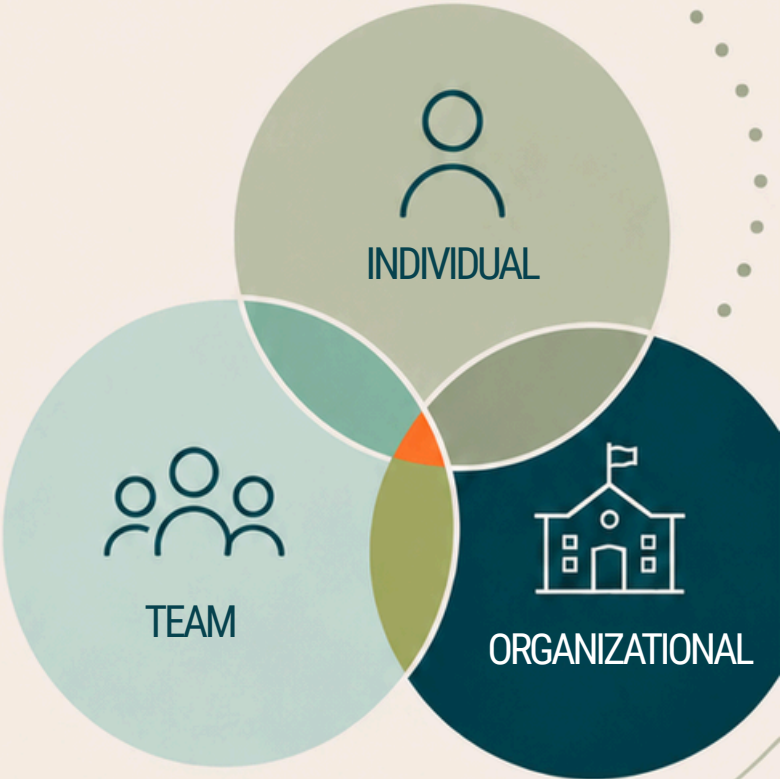
2026

Thrive Profile™ Nonprofit Worker Wellbeing Report

National findings on worker wellbeing, burnout risk, and organizational conditions



WORKER THRIVING CO.
POWERED BY THE BRILLIANT LEAD

WHO WE ARE

The Brilliant Lead is a national consulting firm advancing trauma-informed and worker-centered practices. The firm partners with nonprofits and funders to build cultures of care, belonging, and sustainability.

Worker Thriving Co. is the research and data arm of The Brilliant Lead and the creator of the Thrive Profile™ assessment, used by 20+ nonprofits nationwide. Together, this work is grounded in a shared commitment to making worker wellbeing more visible and transforming data into practical action for the social impact workforce.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Burnout is one of the most consequential yet often least visible challenges facing the nonprofit sector. Nonprofit worker wellbeing is essential to the strength, sustainability, and impact of the sector. Yet burnout is still too often treated as an individual problem to be managed through self-care, coping skills, or personal resilience alone. This report offers a different view. Drawing on data from the Thrive Profile™, it examines how burnout and wellbeing are shaped not only by individual stress, but also by team dynamics, leadership practices, and organizational systems.

This report is shaped by responses from 635 workers across 21 nonprofit organizations in the South and Midwest, including Davidson County, Tennessee; Kalamazoo County, Michigan; and communities across the state of Indiana. Using a multi-level assessment approach, the report examines worker experience across individual, team, and organizational wellbeing, along with patterns by age, tenure, and role.

The overall picture of the dataset is mixed. Team wellbeing appears comparatively strong, with high levels of psychological safety and team support across many participating organizations. At the same time, individual wellbeing remains more fragile and organizational wellbeing is weaker than team experience. Most workers fall into positive stress categories, with the largest share in Honeymoon and Early Stress. The organizations included in this report represent a subset of nonprofits. In some cases, organizations that choose to participate may reflect factors such as existing leadership priorities for wellbeing and a willingness to examine workplace culture.

Key Findings at a Glance

- **Workplace conditions shape burnout.**
  - Burnout appears to be driven more strongly by organizational conditions than by personal coping alone. Workplace Policies & Practices, Leadership Team Priority, and Workplace Culture were more strongly associated with individual wellbeing than any single coping measure.
- **Leadership priority drives worker experience.**
  - Within the organizational domain, Leadership Team Priority emerged as a central driver of worker experience, showing the strongest relationships with Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS), Workplace Culture, and Workplace Policies & Practices.
- **Team culture is essential to wellbeing.**
  - *Team wellbeing is a relative strength* in the dataset, with strong scores in psychological safety, team support, and work-life alignment support.
- **Culture works best when systems reinforce it.**
  - The strongest-performing organizations appear to pair positive team culture with stronger policy environments and clearer leadership commitment to wellbeing.
- **Younger workers face greater risk.**
  - *Workers ages 25–34 emerge as the highest-risk age group* for individual wellbeing, while workers 55 and older report stronger scores across multiple dimensions of wellbeing.
- **Wellbeing dips mid-tenure.**
  - *Workers in the 2–4 year tenure range report weaker experiences* than newer workers in several areas, with improvement appearing again among workers with more than five years of tenure.
- **Leadership roles carry different strain.**
  - *Leaders report weaker scores than workers in non-supervisory roles* on workload, personal life divide, supervisor reliability, and work-life alignment support, even though workers and leaders do not differ significantly in their broader organizational-level experience.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

All together, these findings suggest that burnout in nonprofits is better understood as a system-level challenge with individual consequences. The sector does not appear to be failing because workers cannot cope. **Instead, the data point to a workforce that is often functioning in spite of uneven systems.** Teams may be supportive, but strain becomes more visible where leadership effort does not translate into sustainable workload, clear boundaries, and protective organizational practices.

The implications are significant for nonprofit leaders, funders, and the broader sector. For leaders, the findings point to the importance of treating wellbeing as an operational responsibility rather than a peripheral initiative. For funders, the data suggest that meaningful progress is more likely to come from investing in the structural drivers of wellbeing—including staffing capacity, manager development, workload redesign, and policy infrastructure—rather than relying only on one-time wellness offerings.

For the broader sector, the report underscores the need to stop normalizing burnout as the inevitable cost of mission-driven work and to strengthen the shared evidence base on what actually supports sustainable nonprofit workplaces.

This report concludes with a set of recommendations for leaders, funders, and sector partners.
These include:

- Strengthening workplace policies and practices
- Increasing leadership visibility and consistency around wellbeing
- Paying closer attention to younger, mid-tenure, and leadership groups facing greater strain, and
- Continuing to learn from organizations where wellbeing appears stronger.

Together, these findings point toward a central conclusion: **nonprofit worker wellbeing improves not only when workers are supported, but when the systems around them are designed to make sustainable work possible.**

INTRODUCTION

Worker wellbeing is essential to nonprofit effectiveness, yet burnout continues to shape the sector in ways that are often normalized, under-measured, or misunderstood. This report was developed to contribute a more grounded understanding of how burnout is experienced across participating nonprofit organizations and what conditions appear to support or strain worker wellbeing.

Why Burnout in Nonprofits Matters

Burnout is one of the most consequential yet often least visible challenges facing the nonprofit sector. It can be difficult to name in real time, but its effects are felt everywhere: in high turnover, reduced capacity, strained teams, weakened morale, and diminished community impact.

In many nonprofit settings, burnout is still framed as an individual problem, something that can be addressed primarily through self-care, stronger coping skills, or greater personal resilience. As a result, organizations have often invested in interventions like workshops on time management under pressure or one-time wellness retreats. While these efforts are often well-intentioned, they rarely create lasting change on their own because they do not address the workplace conditions that shape wellbeing day after day.

Burnout is also frequently normalized within mission-driven work. In some organizations, it is treated as an inevitable byproduct of caring deeply, serving urgently, or operating with limited resources. Some leaders have come to accept high levels of strain as typical across the sector, responding as though burnout is unfortunate but unavoidable. This framing is costly. It obscures the organizational patterns that contribute to burnout and can leave workers carrying the burden of adapting to unhealthy conditions rather than challenging them.

If burnout is understood only as a personal failure or the unavoidable cost of purpose-driven work, the sector misses the opportunity to ask more useful questions:

What conditions make worker wellbeing more difficult to sustain? What distinguishes organizations where wellbeing is more protected? And what would it take to create nonprofit workplaces where workers can contribute meaningfully without chronic depletion?

Purpose of This National Report

This report was developed to help make burnout more measurable by examining worker wellbeing across a broader continuum of stress and sustainability. Rather than asking only whether burnout is present, this report explores how workers are experiencing individual, team, and organizational conditions that may contribute to or protect against burnout.

The purpose of this report is to offer actionable insight into what is common, what is concerning, and what appears to be working in participating nonprofit organizations. It seeks to identify patterns across organizations with lower burnout and stronger wellbeing supports, as well as common dynamics among organizations where burnout appears more pronounced.

Over time, the broader vision of this work is to contribute to a national dataset that can help nonprofit organizations focus on interventions that meaningfully improve worker wellbeing and help funders invest in approaches that are more responsive to what workers and organizations actually need. In that sense, this report is both a snapshot of current patterns and a step toward a stronger evidence base for the sector.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was made possible through the support of partners and collaborators who helped expand access to the Thrive Profile™ and strengthen the broader vision of this work.

A huge thank you to **Brandi Cook,** whose rigorous analytic support was essential to this report's development.

We are especially grateful to our Learning Partners, whose partnership helped make the assessment more accessible to nonprofit organizations interested in participating. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the Kalamazoo Community Foundation in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and The Healing Trust in Nashville, Tennessee, for their partnership in helping extend this work through their networks.

We are also grateful to the many nonprofit leaders, workers, and trusted colleagues whose questions, feedback, and engagement have helped refine the Thrive Profile™ over time. Their contributions have strengthened both the tool and the learning reflected in this report.
Thank you for helping advance the audacious vision of positive wellbeing for the workers who sustain and strengthen our communities.

OUR LEARNING PARTNERS

KZCF 100 Years

THE HEALING TRUST

THANK YOU!

LITERATURE REVIEW

The History of Burnout

The modern scholarly literature on burnout begins with Herbert J. Freudenberger's 1974 article, Staff Burn-Out, which described burnout among highly committed helping workers in free-clinic and alternative-service settings. Christina Maslach and colleagues then expanded the concept into a sustained research field by examining burnout in human service settings and by showing that it was not simply an individual weakness, but a work-related response to chronic emotional and interpersonal strain (Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 2001). Later scholarship deepened this understanding by locating burnout within the relationship between workers and their organizational environments. In particular, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and subsequent meta-analytic work showed that burnout is strongly associated with high job demands, insufficient job resources, and poor organizational conditions rather than with individual fragility alone (Alarcon, 2011; Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach et al., 2001).

In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified burnout in ICD-11 as an occupational phenomenon, not a medical diagnosis, and defined it as a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. The WHO description includes three core features: feelings of exhaustion, increased mental distance or cynicism related to one's job, and reduced professional efficacy (World Health Organization, 2019). This framing is especially important for nonprofit settings because it reinforces that burnout should be understood as a workplace condition as much as an individual experience.

Burnout in the Nonprofit Sector

Most peer-reviewed studies do not examine "the nonprofit sector" as a whole; instead, they cluster around humanitarian and NGO workers, social workers and human service workers, and volunteers.
Among direct studies of nonprofit employees, the patterns are consistent with the broader burnout field. In a U.S. study of 93 workers across 15 nonprofit organizations, McClure and Moore (2021) found that most respondents experienced work-related stress and that close coworker relationships were perceived as important buffers against that stress. In China, Deng et al. (2021) surveyed 233 nonprofit employees and found that job demands predicted burnout and psychological distress, while job resources had strong negative associations with both. Across these studies, the same pattern appears repeatedly: nonprofit work combines meaningful mission-driven labor with emotional strain, constrained resources, and organizational pressures that can readily intensify burnout.
U.S. sector reports fill some of the evidence gaps left by peer-reviewed studies. The Center for Effective Philanthropy's 2024 State of Nonprofits report found that burnout remained a top concern and that 95% of nonprofit leaders expressed at least some concern about burnout. The National Council of Nonprofits' 2023 workforce survey, drawing on more than 1,600 responses, found that 50.2% of respondents identified stress and burnout as a cause of workforce shortages. More recently, Nonprofit Finance Fund's 2026 worker well-being research connected nonprofit burnout to financial strain and structural barriers and drew on interviews with nearly 50 nonprofit, foundation, and government leaders; analysis of more than 70 data sources; and responses from 500 California nonprofits. These reports are valuable sector evidence and show that burnout is now recognized as a central organizational capacity issue, not just an individual wellness issue.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gaps in Existing Knowledge

Despite the growth of burnout research overall, there are still important gaps in what is known about burnout in the nonprofit sector specifically. First, most peer-reviewed burnout research has focused on fields such as healthcare, education, or general occupational psychology rather than on nonprofit workers as a distinct workforce. Even within nonprofit-related scholarship, studies are often concentrated in specific subsectors, such as humanitarian aid, social work, or community services, rather than across the broader nonprofit landscape (Deng et al., 2021; Lopes Cardozo et al., 2012).

Second, much of the nonprofit evidence base remains fragmented. There are relatively few published studies that examine nonprofit worker wellbeing across multiple organizational levels or that compare patterns across organizations. This makes it difficult to determine how widely certain experiences are shared across the sector, how organizational context shapes burnout risk, or which workplace conditions most consistently function as protective factors. The literature is also stronger at identifying correlates of burnout than at demonstrating which organizational changes reliably reduce it over time (Henriques et al., 2024; McClure & Moore, 2021).

Third, the field still lacks multi-level, sector-specific data that examine burnout as something shaped by supervisory relationships, leadership practices, and organizational systems. This is especially relevant in nonprofits, where mission commitment, relational work, and constrained resources often intersect. As a result, the sector has often had to rely either on broad burnout theory developed elsewhere or on anecdotal accounts that, while compelling, do not always provide a structured basis for comparison or action (Maslach et al., 2001; World Health Organization, 2019).

Finally, there is a continued need for research on how burnout may be experienced differently across age, gender, race, and ethnicity within the nonprofit workforce. Broader occupational research suggests that burnout can vary across demographic groups (Lawrence et al., 2021; Purvanova & Muros, 2010; Marchand et al., 2018). However, the literature on racial and ethnic differences remains comparatively limited and inconclusive. More nonprofit-specific research is needed to better understand how workplace conditions, identity, and lived experience may intersect in shaping burnout and wellbeing.

Why This Study Matters

This study contributes to a growing but still underdeveloped evidence base on nonprofit worker wellbeing by offering a multi-level view of burnout-related conditions across participating nonprofit organizations. Rather than treating burnout solely as an individual issue, this report examines how worker experience is shaped across individual, team, and organizational dimensions. That approach is aligned with the strongest insights in the literature, which consistently show that burnout emerges through the interaction between workers and the environments in which they are asked to perform (Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach et al., 2001).

This study also matters because it helps move the conversation about nonprofit burnout beyond anecdote and toward a more structured understanding of workplace conditions. The literature is clear that burnout is not solved by resilience messaging alone. It is shaped by workload, support, role design, organizational culture, and access to meaningful resources. A sector-specific dataset cannot answer every question, but it can help clarify where strain is concentrated, where protective factors are present, and what kinds of organizational responses may be most needed (Alarcon, 2011; Henriques et al., 2024; Stanley & Sebastine, 2023).

ABOUT THE PROJECT & TOOL

Project Overview

The Thrive Profile™ Nonprofit Worker Wellbeing Project was developed to better understand the conditions shaping worker wellbeing across the nonprofit sector. At a time when many nonprofit organizations are navigating sustained pressure, staffing strain, and increasing service demands, this project was designed to generate practical, sector-relevant data about how workers are experiencing their workplaces and their work.

This national effort brings together data from multiple cohorts of participating nonprofit organizations across the south and mid-west to identify patterns related to burnout, wellbeing, workplace culture, leadership, and team experience. In addition to offering individual organizations insight into their own results, the project is intended to contribute to a broader understanding of what nonprofit workers need in order to thrive.

The project also aims to fill a gap in sector knowledge. While burnout is widely discussed in nonprofits, there is still limited field-based data that captures worker experience across multiple dimensions of wellbeing and organizational life. By aggregating insights across participating organizations, this project offers a broader view of the challenges and strengths shaping the nonprofit workforce today.

Tool Overview

The data in this report comes from the Thrive ProfileTM, a wellbeing assessment designed to capture how nonprofit workers experience wellbeing across multiple levels of organizational life. Rather than focusing only on individual stress, the tool is designed to examine the broader workplace conditions that influence burnout risk and worker wellbeing. It builds on established research related to burnout, psychological safety, and trauma-informed workplace practices within the nonprofit sector.

The tool was created in 2023 by Sequoia Owen, Founder of The Brilliant Lead LLC, and has been iteratively refined through feedback from trauma-informed professionals, nonprofit executives, and nonprofit workers.

The Thrive Profile generates insight across the individual, team, and organizational levels, allowing participating organizations to see not only how their workers are doing personally, but also how workplace culture, team dynamics, and leadership-related conditions may be contributing to or buffering against burnout.

This multi-level design reflects a core premise of the project: burnout is not solely an individual experience, it is a workplace and systems issue. By pairing wellbeing indicators with organizational and team-level conditions, the tool is intended to support a more complete and actionable understanding of worker experience.

What the tool measures

The Thrive Profile™ consists of 56 core survey items that invite nonprofit workers to self-report their experiences across key dimensions of organizational life. Responses are organized across three interconnected levels of wellbeing:

- **Individual Wellbeing:** Measures how workers experience workload, stress, coping, and personal sustainability in their roles.
- **Team Wellbeing:** Examines how supervisory practices, communication, and team dynamics influence day-to-day work experiences and psychological safety.
- **Organizational Wellbeing:** Assesses how leadership priorities, policies, and organizational systems shape a culture that supports or challenges worker wellbeing.

For a full description of Thrive Profile™ wellbeing levels, domains, and subcategories, see Appendix A.

ABOUT THE PROJECT & TOOL

In addition to these three levels, the tool places respondents along a wellbeing spectrum, adapted from psychologist Herbert Freudenberger's five-stage model of burnout. These categories include:

- **Honeymoon / High Energy**: positive stress with minimal friction
- **Early Stress Onset**: positive stress with emerging friction that may require occasional coping strategies
- **Chronic Stress**: sustained stress that requires more frequent use of coping strategies and may be manageable only for limited periods
- **Burnout**: overwhelming stress that exceeds available coping capacity
- **Habitual Burnout**: prolonged, overwhelming stress that may significantly affect physical and emotional health

The tool aligns with the World Health Organization's framing of burnout resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. Within this framework, the goal is not the complete absence of stress, but a healthier and more sustainable relationship to stress at work.

To reduce feelings of extraction around such personal reflection, workers who complete the assessment receive confidential individual results, along with supportive resources intended to strengthen personal wellbeing.

Together, these measures help identify both areas of strain and sources of protection, offering a fuller picture of the conditions that shape whether nonprofit workers are surviving, coping, or thriving.

How to Interpret Results

Results from the Thrive Profile™ are intended to provide a structured snapshot of worker wellbeing and workplace conditions at a given point in time. They should be interpreted as indicators of patterns and experiences, not as a clinical mental health assessment or definitive judgment about any one person, team, or organization.

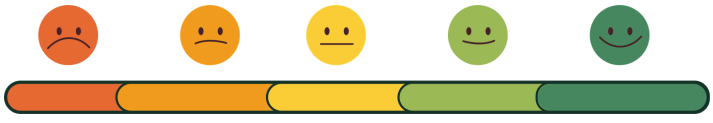
The tool is most useful when interpreted in context. Participating organizations receive an average color rating for overall individual, team, and organizational wellbeing:

- Red: Average scores reflect conditions in which wellbeing support is limited, inconsistent, or experienced as prohibitive.
- Yellow: Average scores reflect conditions in which wellbeing practices are emerging, but are not yet consistently experienced as protective.
- Green: Average scores reflect conditions in which wellbeing supports are established, consistent, and more likely to be experienced as protective.

Full scoring and interpretation details are provided in Appendix B.

When reviewing results, it is important to interpret scores in relation to one another. High scores in one area do not necessarily eliminate strain in another, and lower scores should be understood as signals for reflection and response rather than as failure. The Thrive Profile™ is designed to support conversation as much as measurement by helping organizations identify strengths to build on, tensions to attend to, and opportunities for more sustainable workplace practices.

Additionally, this report applies a stricter statistical standard for highlighting findings at the national level; practical interpretation, organizational use, and applied recommendations may draw on broader directional patterns that are less stringent.



METHODOLOGY

Sample and Participants

The findings presented in this report draw on data from 21 nonprofit organizations across the South and Midwest, including Davidson County, Tennessee; Kalamazoo County, Michigan; and communities across the state of Indiana. Together, these organizations offer insight into worker wellbeing across a range of nonprofit settings and roles, supporting analysis at the individual, team, and organizational levels.

For this report, participants are grouped into two role categories: **workers**, defined as those without supervisory responsibilities, and **leaders**, defined as those responsible for supervising at least one person. The analysis includes both full-time and part-time workers; volunteers and contractors were excluded.

All organizations represented in the dataset are direct-service nonprofits. Mission areas include youth services, senior services, arts, agricultural education, advocacy and social justice, and survivor services. Most participating organizations were non-crisis organizations (95%), and 80% employed 20 or more workers, with a mean worker count of 40. Organizational participation ranged from 7 to 91 worker responses per organization.

A total of 850 nonprofit workers were invited to participate, and this report is based on **635 completed responses**. Organizations joined the project across multiple cohorts through a combination of direct engagement and regional partnerships. While participation rates varied by organization, 95% of participating organizations achieved a response rate of 50% or higher, and the **average response rate across the dataset was 78%.**
Additional demographic information is provided in Appendix C.

APPROXIMATELY

50%

OF PARTICIPANTS WERE FROM

YOUTH SERVICE

ORGANIZATIONS

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

Data were collected using the Thrive Profile™, a 56-item online assessment designed to capture worker experience across multiple dimensions of workplace wellbeing. Workers received the assessment by email and completed it confidentially during their organization's designated survey window. Because organizations participated on a rolling basis, the dataset reflects multiple collection periods rather than a single national administration window.

The assessment is based on self-reported responses related to stress, coping, supervision, team dynamics, leadership, workplace culture, and organizational support. To support candid participation, responses were collected confidentially and analyzed only in aggregate. Individual worker responses were not shared with organizational leadership, and individual organization ratings or responses were not shared with regional partners. This structure was designed to encourage honest feedback while ensuring that reported findings reflect broader organizational patterns rather than individual disclosure.

Workers who completed the assessment also received confidential individual results along with supportive wellbeing resources.

Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) was included in the Thrive Profile™ as a supplementary indicator of overall worker experience. In addition to the tool's domain- and subcategory-level measures of individual, team, and organizational wellbeing, eNPS provides a concise directional measure of how positively workers view their organization as a place to work. Within this report, eNPS was used to complement the Thrive Profile™ wellbeing data by capturing broader worker sentiment and examining how that sentiment relates to burnout-related conditions across domains. eNPS was analyzed alongside Thrive Profile™ subcategories through correlations and regression models to better understand which workplace conditions are most closely tied to overall worker experience.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, results reflect self-reported worker experience. This offers valuable insight into how workplace conditions are experienced and understood, while also being influenced by timing, perception, and organizational context. Second, the Thrive Profile™ provides a snapshot in time rather than a longitudinal measure of change. Findings should therefore be interpreted as indicators of conditions during the reporting period, not as fixed judgments about any one person, team, or organization.

Third, the organizations included in this report represent the subset of nonprofits that participated in the project during the reporting period. Findings should therefore not be interpreted as statistically representative of the nonprofit sector as a whole. Instead, they offer a structured view of patterns emerging across participating organizations. Participation itself may also reflect sampling bias. In some cases, organizations that choose to participate may differ from those that do not, including in their leadership priorities, organizational capacity, or willingness to examine workplace culture. Fourthly, this study conducted demographic analysis on race and ethnicity but was unable to draw conclusions due to smaller sample sizes across some groups.

Finally, while the Thrive Profile™ is designed to identify patterns related to worker wellbeing and burnout risk, it is not a clinical mental health assessment and should not be used as a diagnostic tool. Its purpose is to support reflection, interpretation, and action related to the workplace conditions that shape worker wellbeing.

See Appendix D for additional methodology information on analytic approach.

KEY FINDINGS

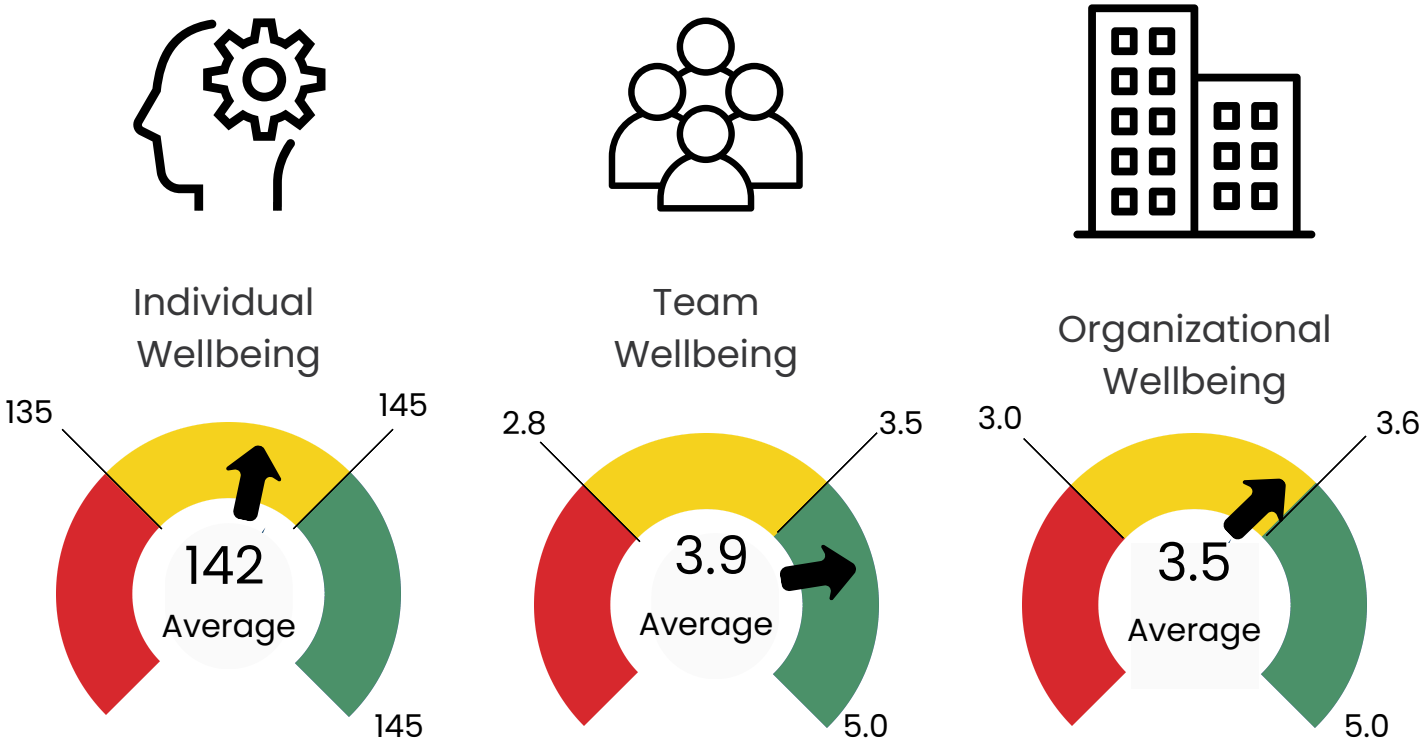
Nonprofit workers are often continuing to perform meaningful work despite system strain — not because those systems are fully supporting them.

DATASET SNAPSHOT

This snapshot reflects responses from 635 full-time and part-time workers from 21 organizations who completed the Thrive Profile™ assessment. Findings represent overall patterns and themes across the workforce.[1]

The national picture is mixed. Results suggest that the strongest experiences in the dataset are occurring at the team level, while strain is more visible where team experience must be translated into organizational infrastructure, policies, and leadership action.

Figure 1. Wellbeing Averages Across the Data Set



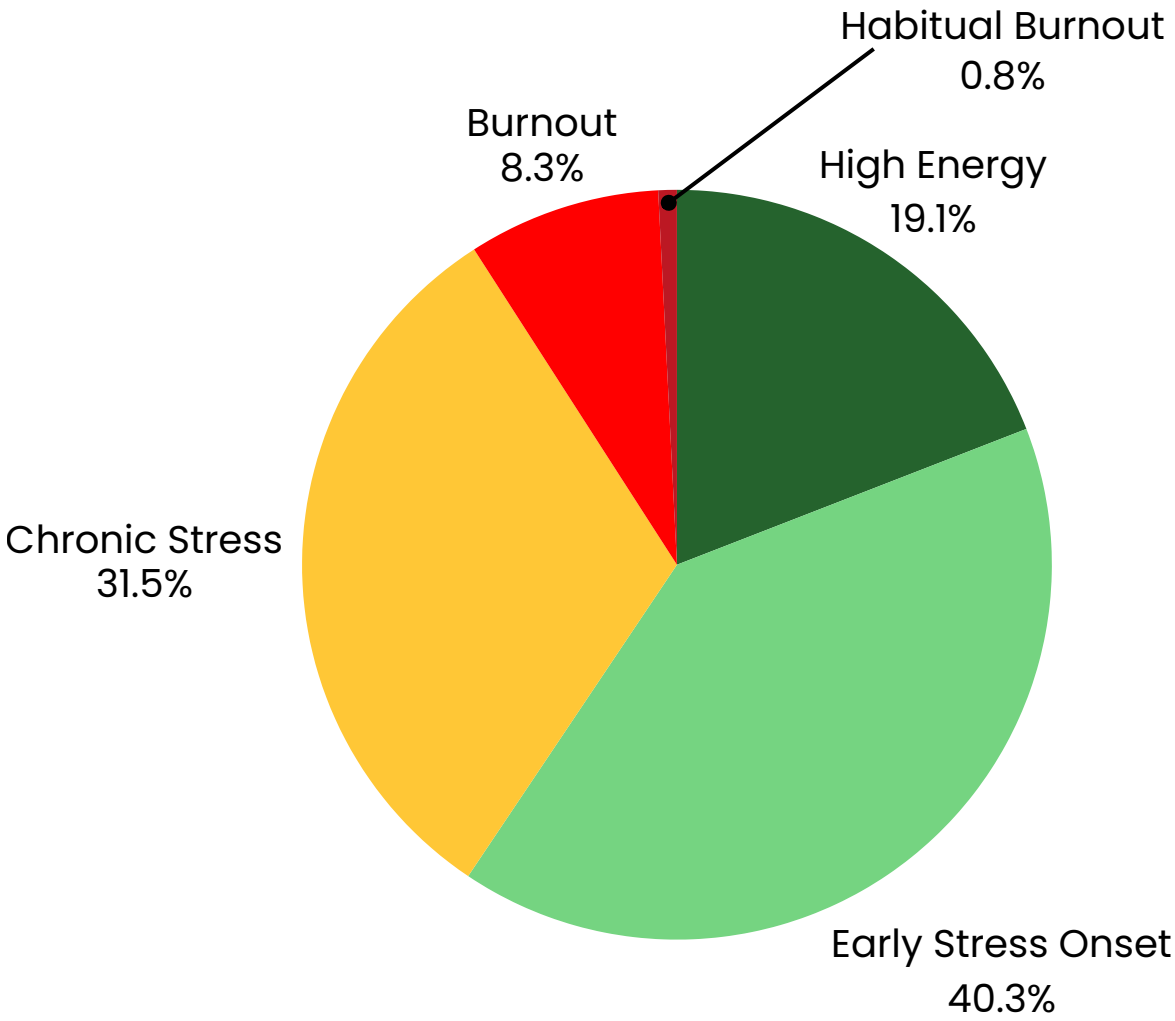
Team wellbeing is the strongest national domain, but organizational conditions are weaker and individual wellbeing remains fragile.

[1] Because this approach involves averaging at multiple levels, the final results reflect the typical experience within and across organizations, rather than a purely respondent-weighted national average. Additionally, the color-coded interpretation in Figure 1 is based on a benchmarking system within the dataset and do not adhere to the same guidelines as the stringent statistical analysis. See color coded interpretation guide in Appendix B.

DATASET SNAPSHOT

For individual wellbeing, most workers in the dataset fell within the High Energy and Early Stress Onset phases (59.4%), which reflect forms of positive, productive stress. The Chronic Stress phase signals more persistent strain that draws heavily on a worker's coping resources. The Burnout phases reflect overwhelming stress that exceeds a worker's ability to cope.[2]

Figure 2. A Breakdown of Individual Worker Wellbeing Results by Percentage



[2]Participants respond to a series of questions pertaining to stress levels and coping at work and are placed in a phase category that aligns with their self-reported answers. See page 8 for definitions of stress categories.

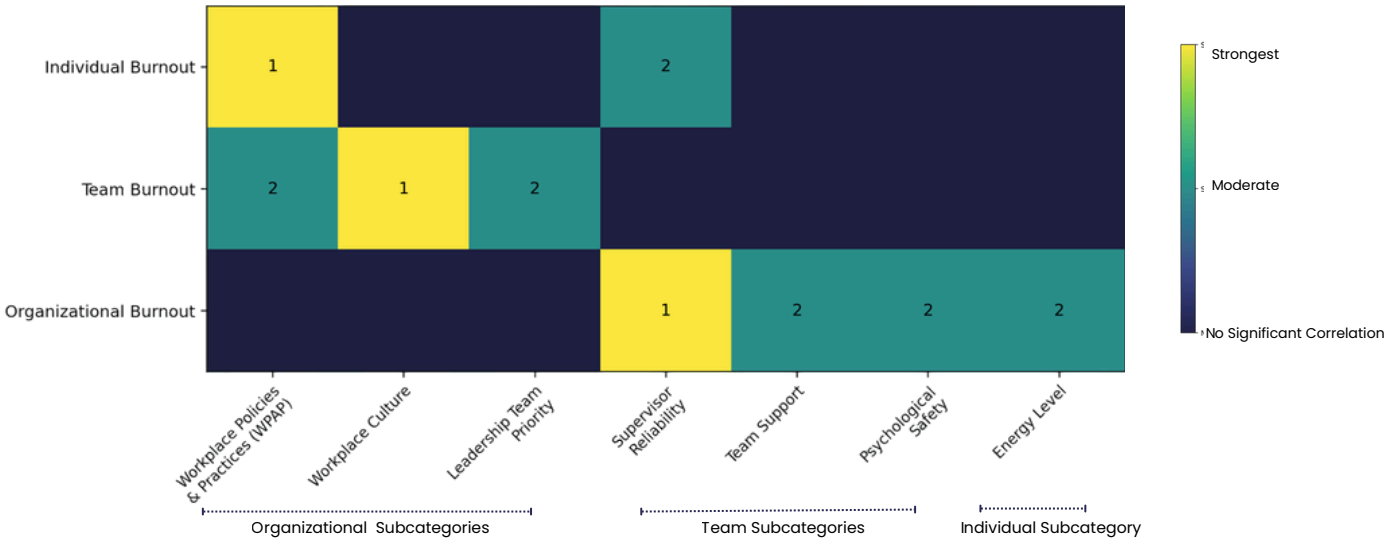
KEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS

FINDING 1: ORGANIZATIONAL CONDITIONS DRIVE BURNOUT

Across the dataset, organizational factors consistently emerged as the strongest predictor of burnout. This finding is consistent with previous research.

Organizational subcategories (Workplace Policies & Practices, Leadership Team Priority, and Workplace Culture) were more strongly associated with individual wellbeing than any single personal coping measure.

Figure 3. Regression Summary Heat Map: Strongest Predictors of Burnout Outcomes



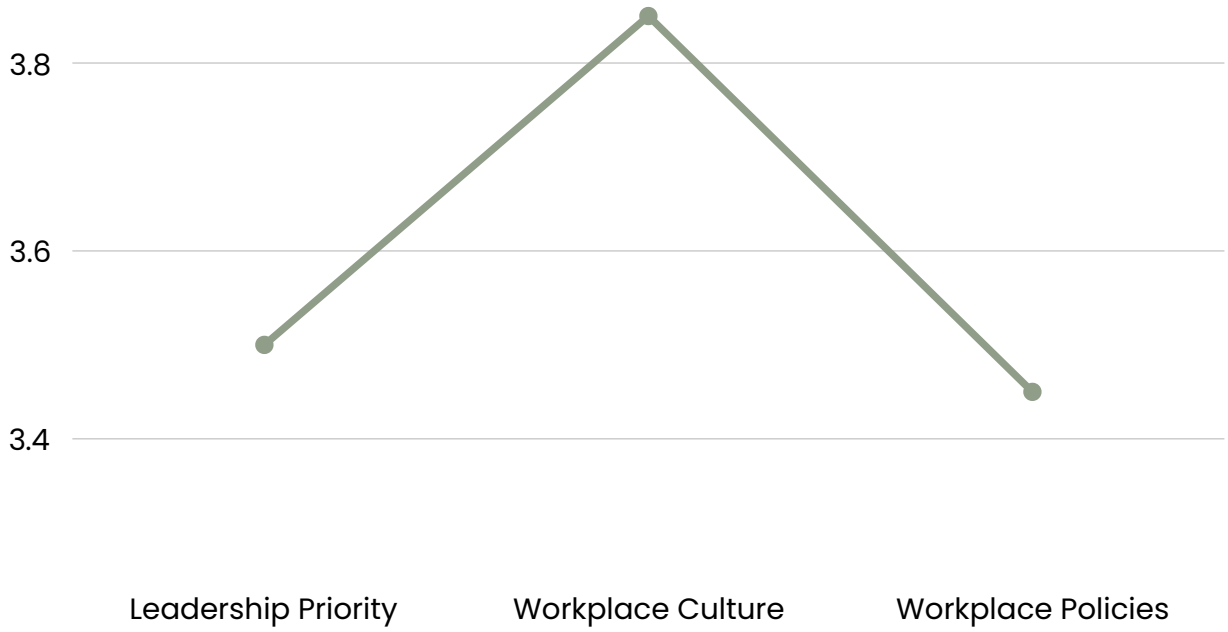
*Cell labels indicate predicator rank: rank 1=strongest predictor, 2= secondary predictor. Columns with darkest shading have no predictive outcomes.

Key Takeaway: Burnout appears more responsive to workplace design than to resilience efforts alone, suggesting that prevention has to start with the conditions workers are navigating every day.

KEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS

FINDING 2: LEADERSHIP PRIORITY DRIVES WORKER EXPERIENCE

Figure 4. Overall Organizational Wellbeing Subcategory Scores



Although Workplace Culture was the strongest-performing organizational subcategory overall, the analysis suggests that leadership priority plays a more influential role in shaping how workers experience organizational life and how those experiences translate into broader perceptions of the workplace.

What is Leadership Priority?
Leadership Priority is a subcategory that measures the extent to which leadership visibly prioritizes worker wellbeing in decision-making, communication, and practice.

KEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS: FINDING 2 CONTINUED

The questions within the Leadership Priority subcategory include…

- **Employee well-being is a priority for our organization's leadership.**
- **Our organization's leadership embodies the values of our organization.**
- **Organization leadership is equipped to lead a workplace that understands the negative effects of our work on the organization's employees.**
- **Organization leadership have implemented one or more strategies to assist with the negative effects of our work within the past 6 months.**
- **Some organization leaders prioritize well-being more than others.**

Correlations were performed on Organizational Burnout subcategories and Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) to further illustrate the relationships between them. Within the organizational domain, Leadership Team Priority showed the strongest relationships with eNPS, Workplace Culture, and Workplace Policies & Practices.

Figure 5. Organizational Correlation Strengths

	Leadership Team Priority	Workplace Culture	Workplace Policies & Practices	eNPS
Leadership Team Priority	1	0.5019	0.6090	0.6134
Workplace Culture	0.5019	1	0.4306	0.5440
Workplace Policies & Practices	0.6090	0.4306	1	0.5398
eNPS	0.6134	0.5440	0.5398	1

*Results were interpreted using an alpha level of .05, with smaller p-values indicating stronger statistical evidence.

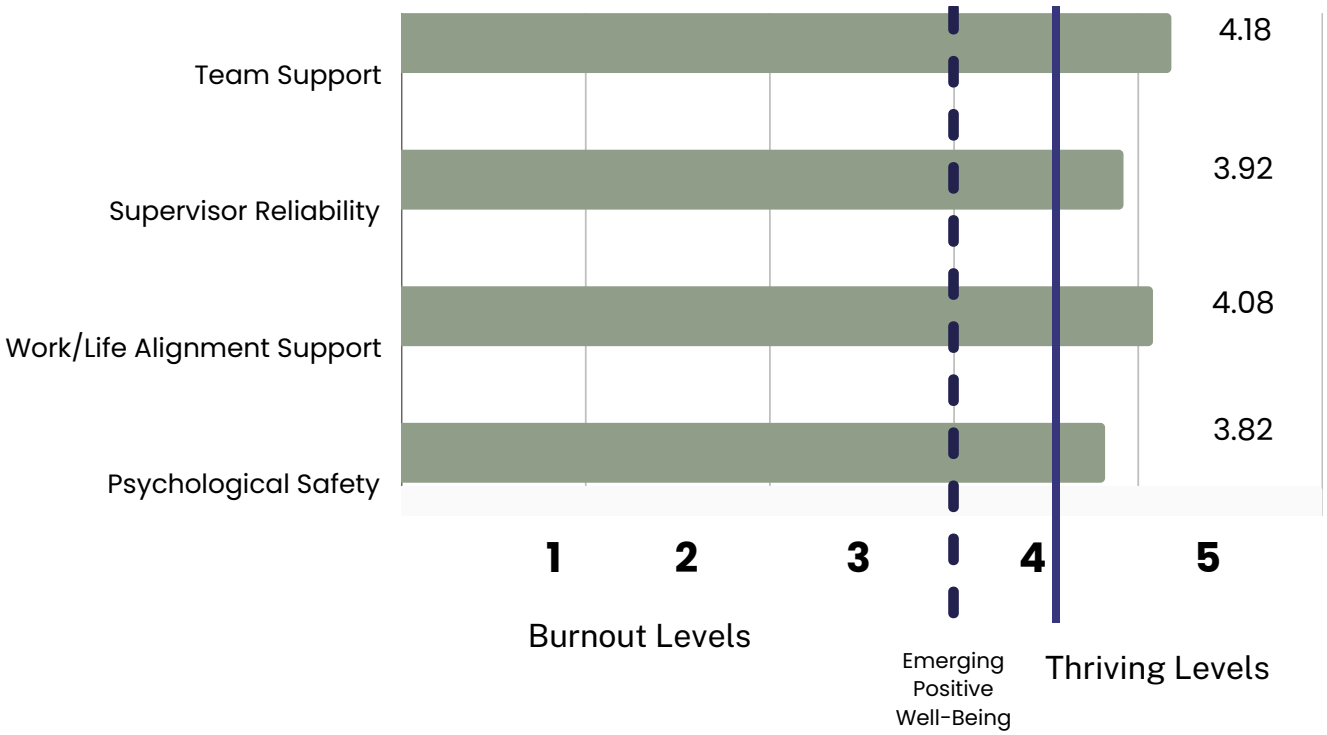
Key Takeaway: Leadership does not just influence tone; it appears to shape whether wellbeing is translated into daily practice, policy, and worker experience.

KEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS

FINDING 3: TEAM CULTURE IS ESSENTIAL TO WELLBEING

The dataset on average presents with thriving team wellbeing scores which confirms the literature that peer-support is essential for wellbeing.

Figure 6. Team Wellbeing Subcategory Scores



Subcategory Definitions

Supervisor Reliability	The degree to which supervisors are consistent, dependable, and responsive in supporting team members.
Work-Life Alignment Support	The degree to which supervisors support workers when wellbeing needs arise.
Team Support	The level of support, care, and mutual assistance experienced within the team.
Psychological Safety	The degree to which workers feel safe speaking up, asking for help, sharing concerns, and being honest without fear of negative consequences.

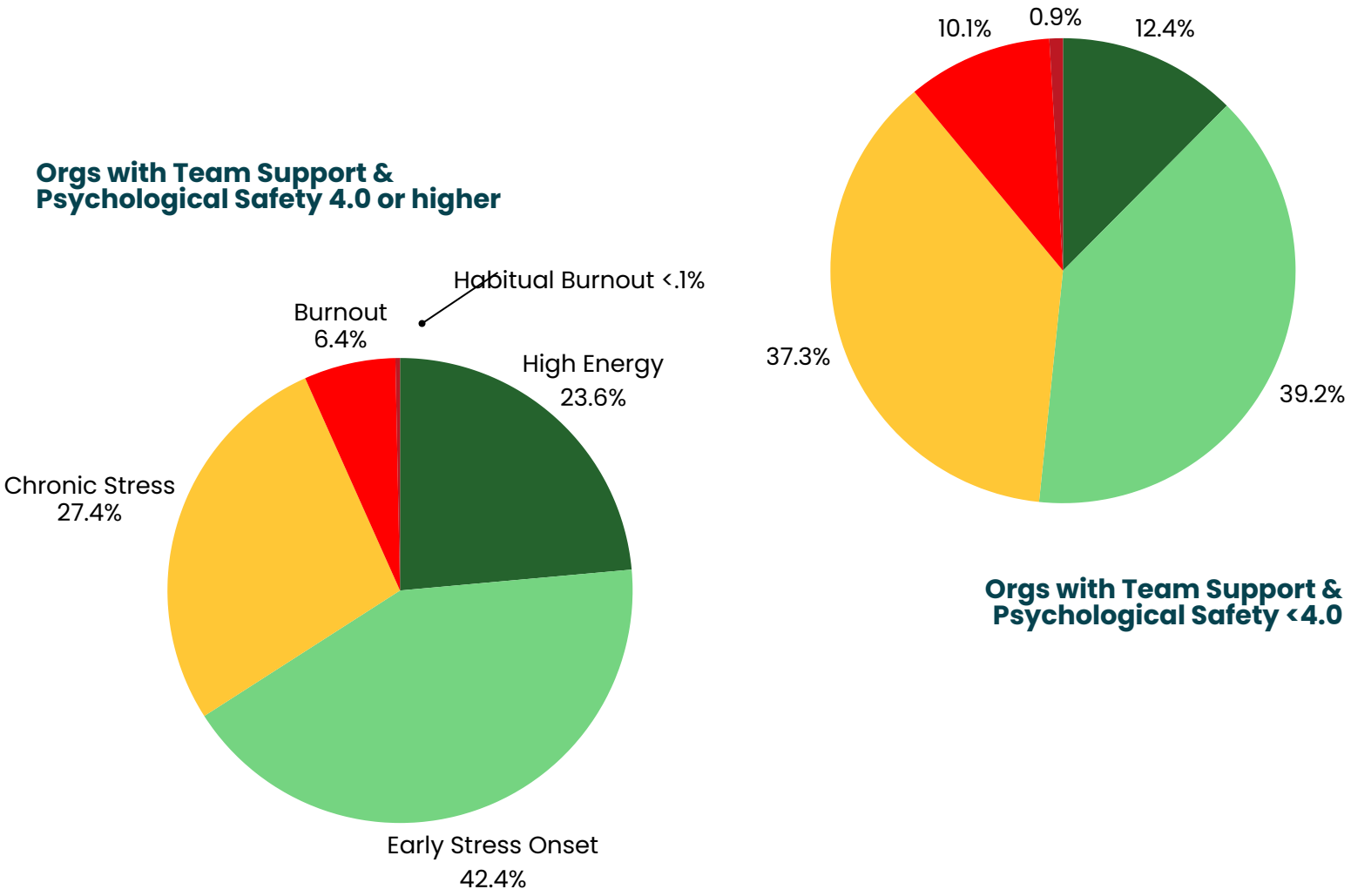
KEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS: FINDING 3 CONTINUED

71% report Psychological Safety 4.0 or above

54% report Team Support 4.0 or above

*Psychological safety and team support appear to be meaningful protective factors in the dataset.

Figure 7. Worker Wellbeing Distribution in Organizations with Higher vs. Lower Team Support and Psychological Safety



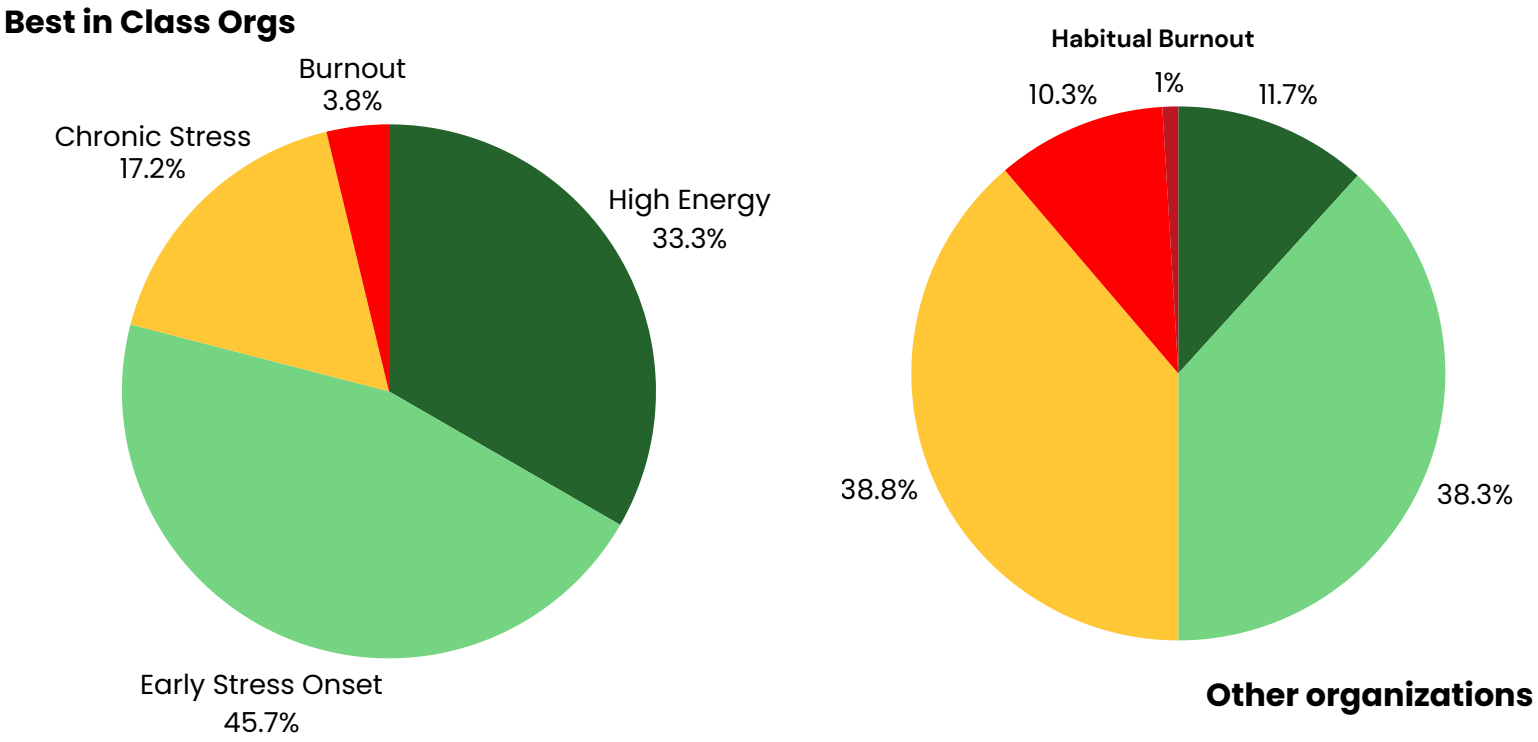
Key Takeaway: Strong team relationships may help workers stay connected and supported, even when other parts of the organization are under strain.

KEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS

FINDING 4: CULTURE WORKS BEST WHEN SYSTEMS REINFORCE IT

The strongest-performing organizations in the dataset do not appear to be distinguished by team culture alone. According to the analysis, higher-performing workforces tend to pair strong team culture with stronger policy environments and stronger leadership-priority scores. This suggests that positive worker experience is supported not only by interpersonal connection, but also by clearer systems and more visible organizational commitment to wellbeing.

Figure 8. Worker Wellbeing Distribution in Best-in-Class v. Other Organizations



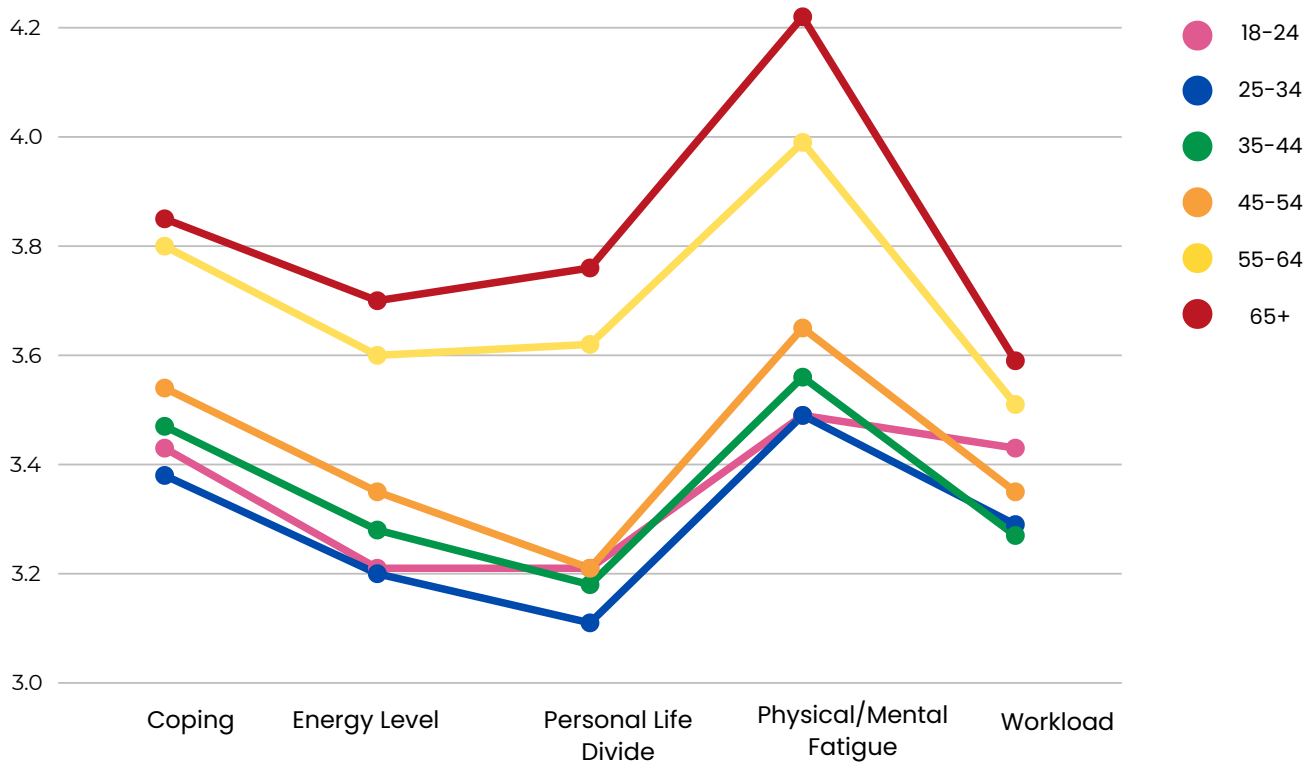
Key Takeaway: Positive culture is most protective when it is reinforced by leadership action and clear organizational systems, not left to teams to carry on their own.

KEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS

FINDING 5: YOUNGER WORKERS FACE GREATER RISK

Age differences are pronounced in the individual wellbeing results. Workers ages 25–34 emerge as the highest-risk age group, with the lowest individual wellbeing scores in the dataset. By contrast, individual wellbeing improves with age: workers 55 and older report stronger scores across coping, energy, personal life divide, physical/mental fatigue, and workload than younger age groups. The analysis also found that age-based differences were strongest in Personal Life Divide (PLD) and Energy Level, suggesting that boundaries and energy restoration vary more sharply across age than some other dimensions of burnout.

Figure 9. Individual Wellbeing by Age



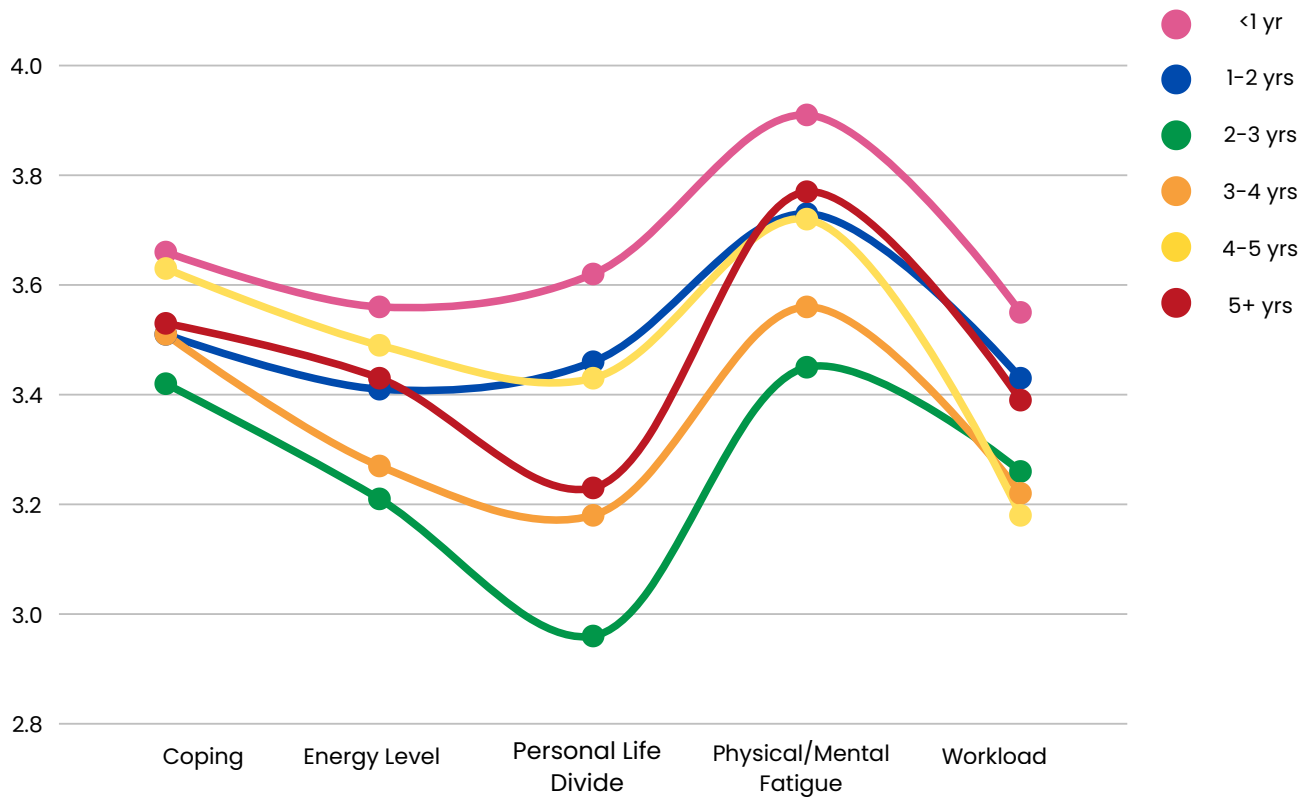
Key Takeaway: Younger workers may need more intentional support with work flexibility, workload, and sustainable role development than organizations often assume.

KEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS

FINDING 6: WELLBEING DIPS MID-TENURE

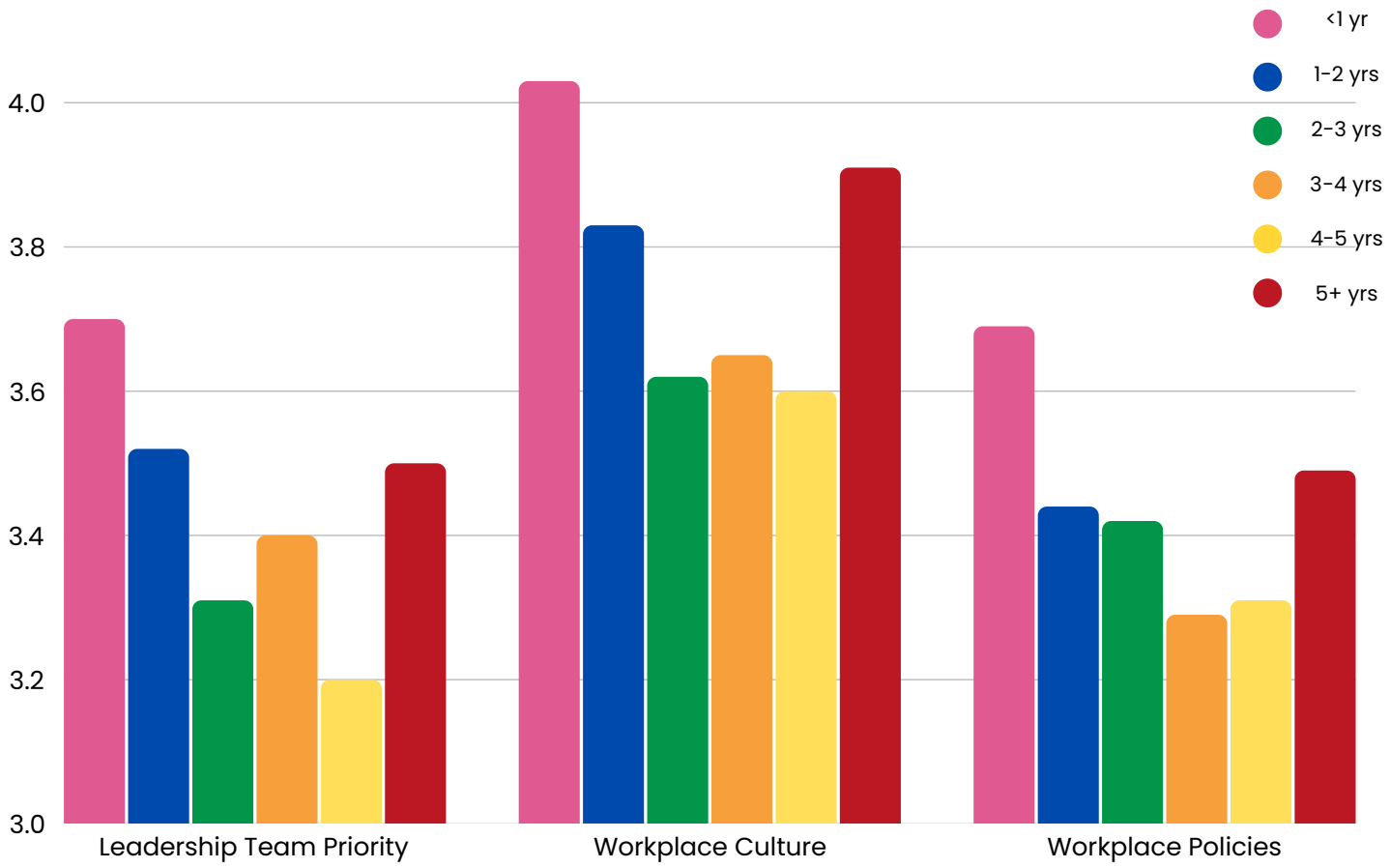
Tenure patterns point to a mid-tenure drop-off in wellbeing. In the individual domain, wellbeing and fatigue decline through the 2–4 year tenure range and improve again among workers with more than five years of tenure. A similar pattern appears in the organizational domain: mid-tenure workers report significantly different experiences than newer workers, with the clearest differences appearing in Workplace Culture and Workplace Policies & Practices.

Figure 10. Individual Wellbeing by Tenure



KEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS: FINDING 6 CONTINUED

Figure 11. Organizational Wellbeing Scores by Tenure



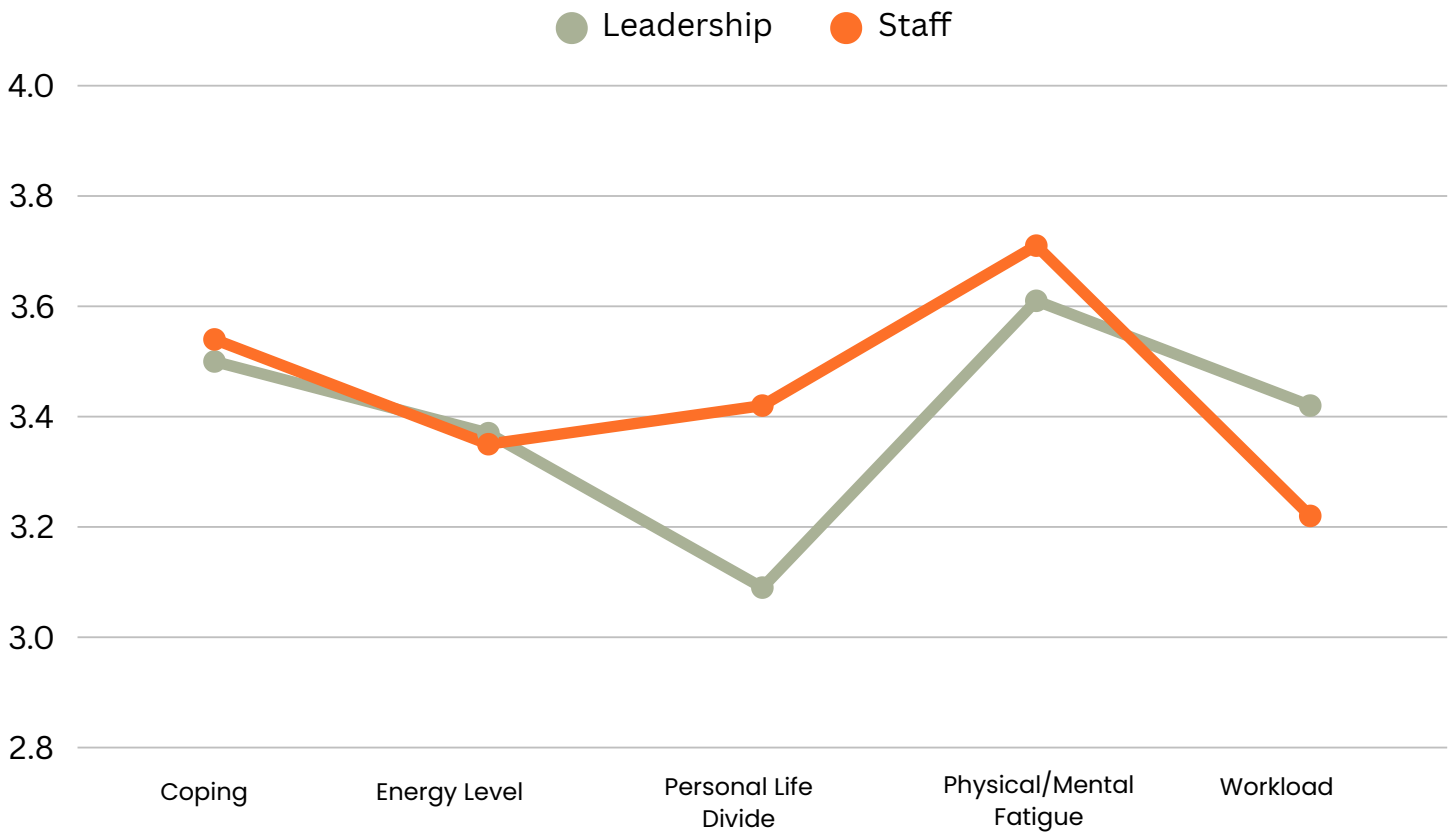
Key Takeaway: Early positive experiences may not be enough to sustain wellbeing over time, especially as responsibilities deepen and support does not evolve with them.

KEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS

FINDING 7: LEADERSHIP CARRIES DIFFERENT STRAIN

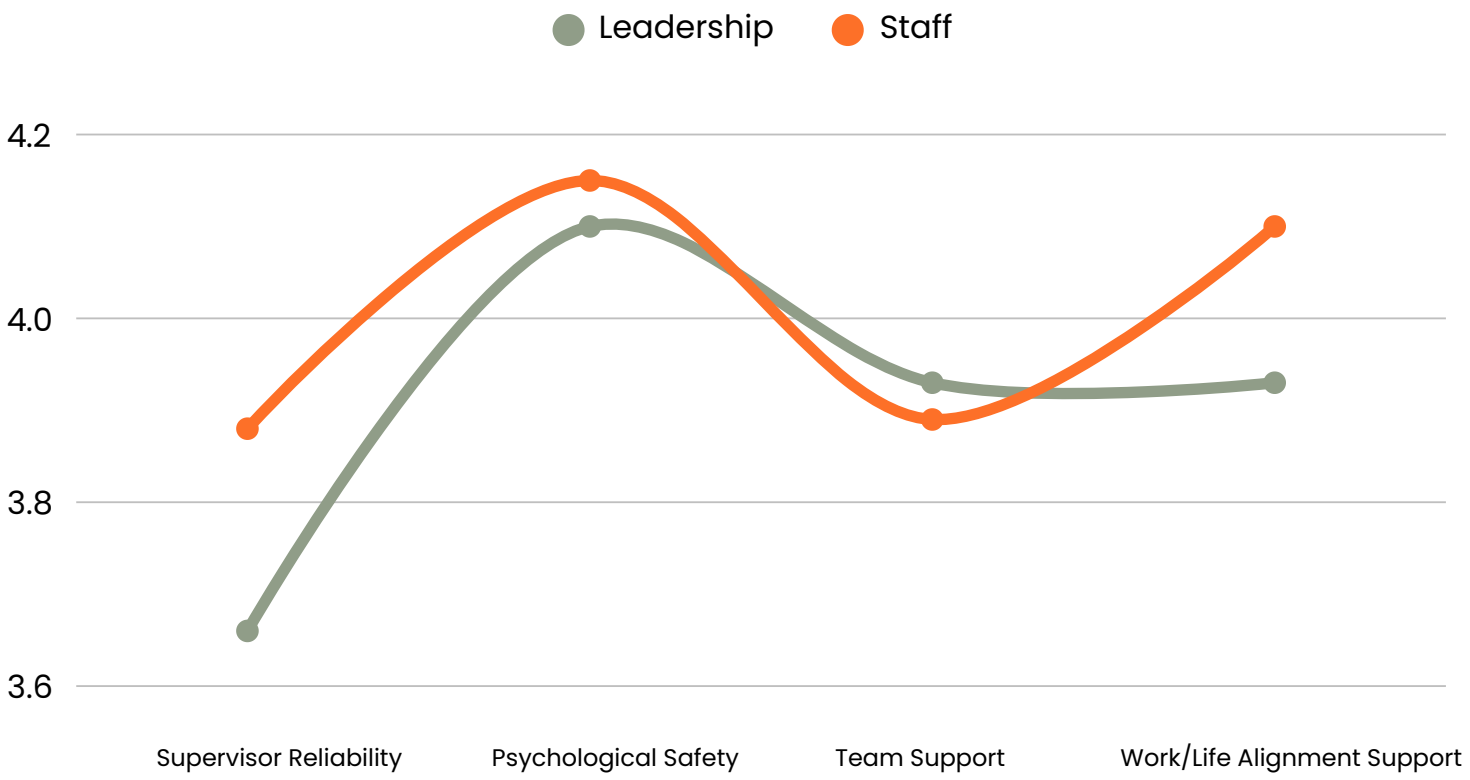
Role differences are concentrated in the individual and team domains rather than the organizational domain. In the individual domain, leaders report significantly weaker scores on Personal Life Divide and Workload than workers in non-supervisory roles, while no significant role differences appear in Coping, Energy Level, or Physical/Mental Fatigue. In the team domain, leaders also rate Supervisor Reliability and Work-Life Alignment Support lower than workers in non-supervisory roles. By contrast, no statistically significant role differences were found in the organizational domain, suggesting that workers and leaders experience the broader organization similarly even when their day-to-day individual and team experiences diverge.

Figure 12. Individual Wellbeing by Role



KEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS: FINDING 7 CONTINUED

Figure 13. Team Wellbeing Scores by Role



Key Takeaway: Leaders are not outside the wellbeing picture; they appear to carry distinct forms of strain that may affect both their own sustainability and the support they provide to others.

POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR KEY PATTERNS

Age Related Patterns

The finding that burnout differs across age groups is consistent with broader research. Marchand et al. (2018) found that burnout symptoms can vary by age and gender, with younger workers often showing elevated risk. For workers ages 25–34, higher strain may reflect the convergence of multiple transitions at once, including career advancement, growing responsibility, financial pressure, and family formation. Practitioner research on Zillennials also suggests that workers on the Millennial–Gen Z cusp are looking for a more holistic employee experience, including flexibility, support, and benefits that align with the realities of their lives (MetLife, 2026). The second highest risk group is between ages 18 - 24. Broader social research similarly shows that ages 18–34 are often marked by major economic and family transitions (Pew Research Center, 2024). Together, these overlapping demands may help explain why this age group appears especially vulnerable when workload and organizational support are out of balance.

Mid-Tenure Patterns

One possible explanation for the mid-tenure dip is that early positive experiences are not always sustained as workers move deeper into their roles. In the Thrive Profile™ analysis, wellbeing declined through the 2–4 year tenure range, which the report suggests may reflect increased workload and responsibilities. At the same time, mid-tenure workers also reported weaker experiences in Workplace Culture and Workplace Policies & Practices, suggesting that organizational supports may not be keeping pace as roles become more demanding. A final possible explanation is survivorship—workers with the highest levels of strain may be more likely to leave before reaching longer tenure, while those who remain may have developed stronger coping strategies, clearer boundaries, and greater role stability over time.

The interaction analysis adds another layer: burnout risk appears to be shaped by the combination of age, tenure, and role, with young, mid-tenure leaders emerging as the highest-risk group.

WHAT THE FINDINGS MEAN

Implications for the Sector

Taken together, these findings suggest that nonprofit burnout should be understood less as a failure of individual resilience and more as a reflection of the conditions under which workers are expected to perform. Across participating organizations, the strongest patterns do not point to workers who are unable to cope. Instead, they point to a workforce that is often functioning in spite of uneven systems, with strain emerging most clearly where workload, boundaries, leadership, and organizational infrastructure are weakest.

The findings also suggest that the nonprofit sector may be stronger at fostering team connection than at sustaining the systems that protect worker wellbeing over time. Team culture appears to be a relative asset in this dataset, with high levels of psychological safety and team support present across many organizations. Yet stronger team culture alone does not appear sufficient to offset weaker leadership priority, inconsistent workplace policies, or ongoing workload strain. In that sense, the sector's challenge is not simply building more supportive teams, but ensuring that organizational conditions reinforce what teams are already doing well.

More broadly, these findings support a shift in how nonprofit worker wellbeing is discussed. If the sector continues to frame burnout primarily as an issue of self-care, resilience, or individual capacity, it risks overlooking the organizational design choices that shape burnout most powerfully. The data instead point toward a more useful sector-wide question: what structures, expectations, and leadership behaviors make meaningful work sustainable?

Implications for Nonprofit Leaders

For nonprofit leaders, the strongest implication is that wellbeing is not shaped by culture alone. Workers may experience positive team relationships and still report lower scores where leadership priority is inconsistent, work-life alignment support is weak, or policies do not adequately support recovery and sustainability. The analysis suggests that leadership priority is one of the clearest organizational levers available, both because of its relationship to worker experience and because of its influence on culture and policies more broadly.

These findings also point to the importance of paying closer attention to who is carrying the most strain. The elevated strain among younger workers may reflect a mix of life stage, career stage, and changing expectations around flexibility, role growth, and sustainability at work. While this report does not isolate those causes directly, it suggests that younger workers may benefit from greater flexibility, more supportive supervision, and more realistic workload design. Mid-tenure workers and leaders may both benefit from workload equity. Leaders appear to have a distinct need for supervisor reliability and work-life alignment support as they rated it lower than workers in non-supervisory roles. This suggests that leadership is not simply the site of intervention, but also a group with its own support needs.

Overall, the findings suggest that nonprofit leaders should view wellbeing as an operational responsibility rather than a peripheral one. Where leadership clearly prioritizes wellbeing, communicates it consistently, and reinforces it through policies and practice, workers appear more likely to experience stronger and more sustainable conditions. Where that alignment is missing, even positive culture may not be enough to prevent friction and strain.

WHAT THE FINDINGS MEAN

Implications for Funders

For funders, these findings reinforce that workforce wellbeing is not separate from organizational effectiveness. Burnout shapes retention, stability, and the day-to-day capacity of nonprofit organizations to deliver on mission. If worker wellbeing is influenced most strongly by organizational conditions, then philanthropic responses focused only on short-term wellness activities are unlikely to create durable change on their own.

The data instead suggest that funders may have the greatest impact when they support the underlying conditions that make work more sustainable.

That includes investment in:

- Policy infrastructure,
- Staffing capacity,
- Manager capability,
- Workload redesign, and
- Leadership accountability for wellbeing practices.

The findings also point to the value of funding not only innovation, but implementation: the translation of values into day-to-day structures that workers can actually experience.

Finally, these results suggest that funders can play an important role in shaping the field's expectations. If burnout is treated as inevitable in mission-driven work, organizations may continue to normalize unsustainable conditions. By contrast, if funders resource wellbeing as a core capacity issue and look for evidence of leadership commitment, policy support, and sustainable management practice, they can help shift the sector toward a more realistic and responsible understanding of what it takes for nonprofit workers to thrive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ACTIONS FOR FUNDERS

1 Fund the structural drivers of wellbeing

Invest in staffing capacity, manager development, workload redesign, policy infrastructure, and trauma-informed system design rather than relying only on one-time wellness offerings.

2 Fund the structural drivers of wellbeing

Support organizations in translating wellbeing values into concrete systems, supervision practices, and sustainable operating standards.

3 Treat worker wellbeing as a capacity issue

Recognize that burnout affects retention, stability, and mission delivery, and fund it accordingly as part of organizational effectiveness.

4 Ask stronger questions about sustainability

Encourage grantees to reflect on workload, leadership accountability, flexibility, and policy support, not just whether they offer wellness activities.

5 Support shared learning from organizations with stronger wellbeing outcomes

Help document and spread the practices of organizations that appear to pair strong team culture with stronger leadership and policy environments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ACTIONS FOR LEADERS

1 Treat worker wellbeing as an operational responsibility

Position wellbeing as part of leadership practice, workload design, and organizational systems rather than as a separate wellness initiative.

2 Strengthen workplace policies and practices

Review leave, flexibility, communication norms, workload expectations, and staffing practices to ensure policies are clear, equitable, and protective in day-to-day work.

3 Prioritize leadership visibility and consistency around wellbeing

Ensure that leadership communicates wellbeing as a real priority through decisions, modeling, and follow-through, not only through values statements.

4 Support the workers at highest risk

Pay particular attention to younger workers, mid-tenure workers, and leaders, who appear to experience distinct forms of strain in the data.

5 Use team strengths as a foundation, not a substitute

Build on strong team support and psychological safety while also addressing the organizational conditions that shape whether those strengths can be sustained.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ACTIONS FOR BROADER SECTOR

1 Stop normalizing burnout as the cost of mission-driven work

Shift sector language away from inevitability and toward a clearer understanding that burnout is shaped by workplace conditions and organizational choices.

2 Expand what counts as a wellbeing practice

Move beyond self-care and resilience messaging to include workload, boundaries, trauma-informed supervision, policy, and sustainable management as core wellbeing issues.

3 Elevate leadership and systems as part of the solution

Encourage sector conversations, capacity-building efforts, and peer learning that address policy infrastructure and leadership behavior.

4 Build a stronger shared evidence base

Continue gathering sector-specific data on worker wellbeing so that leaders, funders, and intermediaries can act on patterns rather than anecdotes alone.

5 Identify and learn from high-performing organizations

Identify and study organizations where wellbeing appears stronger in order to surface concrete, adaptable practices for the field.

CONCLUSION

At its core, this report points to a hopeful truth: worker wellbeing in nonprofits is not fixed. It is shaped by the conditions organizations create, the leadership they model, and the systems they choose to strengthen.

Across participating organizations, teams often appear stronger than the systems around them. Workers may feel supported by one another, yet still experience strain where leadership priority, workload equity, and policy supports fall short. While many workers in this dataset are carrying real strain, the findings also suggest that healthier, more sustainable nonprofit workplaces are possible.

At the same time, this dataset tells only part of the nonprofit story. It reflects the experiences of organizations that chose to participate in a wellbeing assessment—organizations that may already have some willingness, capacity, or leadership interest in examining workplace culture and worker wellbeing. The story that remains less visible may be that of organizations that would be less likely to engage in a study like this at all, including those where wellbeing is not yet a clear priority or where strain may be even harder to name, measure, or address.

It is our hope that this report helps move the sector closer to a better future: one in which the people who care for our communities are also cared for by their workplaces, and one in which worker wellbeing is not treated as optional, but as essential to the sustainability and impact of nonprofit work.

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APPENDIX A.

Domains and Subcategories Measured by the Thrive Profile™

Wellbeing Level	Subcategory	Definition
Individual Wellbeing	Energy Level	The level of passion and enthusiasm needed to carry out work.
	Physical/Mental Fatigue	The level of physical vitality and mental clarity required for effective work execution.
	Workload	The level of capability to complete the day-to-day tasks of one's role.
	Coping	The level of ability to maintain healthy habits in stressful situations.
	Personal Life Divide	The level of healthy boundaries between personal and professional life.
Team Wellbeing	Supervisor Reliability	The degree to which supervisors are consistent, dependable, and responsive in supporting team members.
	Work-Life Alignment Support	The degree to which supervisors support workers when wellbeing needs arise.
	Team Support	The level of support, care, and mutual assistance experienced within the team.
	Psychological Safety	The degree to which workers feel safe speaking up, asking for help, sharing concerns, and being honest without fear of negative consequences.
Organizational Wellbeing	Leadership Priority	The extent to which leadership visibly prioritizes worker wellbeing in decision-making, communication, and practice.
	Workplace Culture	The overall norms, values, and day-to-day environment that shape whether workers feel respected, supported, and able to thrive.
	Wellbeing Policies and Practices	The extent to which formal policies, structures, and organizational practices support worker wellbeing in concrete ways.

APPENDIX B.
Thrive Profile™ Scoring and Interpretation Guide

Overview of Scoring Approach

The Thrive Profile™ uses a 5-point response scale to assess worker experience across multiple dimensions of wellbeing. A rating of 1 is strong disagreement of wellbeing support, 3 is neither agree or disagree, 5 is strong agreement of wellbeing support. There are also reverse-scored questions throughout the survey to mitigate response bias.

Individual survey items are grouped into subcategories, which then roll up into three broader wellbeing levels: Individual Wellbeing, Team Wellbeing, and Organizational Wellbeing.

Scores are interpreted using both subcategory-level thresholds and overall color ratings to help identify patterns of strain, emerging support, and protective conditions.

Score Construction

Survey responses are averaged at multiple levels:

- Item level: each survey item receives a score based on the worker's response
- Subcategory level: related items are averaged to produce a subcategory score
- Wellbeing level: subcategory scores are grouped into broader averages for Individual, Team, and Organizational Wellbeing
- Organizational summary level: overall ratings are used to provide a snapshot of how an organization compares with patterns in the broader Thrive Profile™ dataset

Interpretation Threshold

A. Subcategory interpretation table

Level	Score Range/Threshold	Interpretation
Concerning	Below 3.0	A majority of workers report negative experiences in this area, suggesting meaningful strain or limited support.
Emerging	3.0–3.4	Workers report mixed or largely neutral experiences, suggesting inconsistency or uneven support.
Thriving	3.5 and above	A majority of workers report positive experiences in this area, suggesting this area functions as a source of support or protection.

APPENDIX B.
Thrive Profile™ Scoring and Interpretation Guide

A. Wellbeing level interpretation table

Color Rating	Interpretation
Red	Overall scores suggest wellbeing support is limited, inconsistent, or experienced as prohibitive.
Yellow	Overall scores suggest wellbeing practices are developing, but are not yet consistently experienced as protective.
Green	Overall scores suggest wellbeing supports are established, consistent, and more likely to be experienced as protective.

Overall color ratings are benchmarked against other nonprofit organizations in the Thrive Profile™ dataset. As the benchmark dataset grows, interpretation ranges may be refined over time.

APPENDIX C.

Demographic Information for Thrive Profile™ Data Set

This appendix provides demographic information for respondents included in the Thrive Profile™ dataset. These figures are intended to offer additional context for the findings presented in this report and reflect only those respondents who answered each demographic item.

ROLE

Role Category	Number of Respondents
Managers	120
Senior Leaders	79
Workers	429
Prefer not to Answer	7

RACE

Race	Number of Respondents
Black/African American	145
White/Caucasian	384
2 or more Races	34
Prefer not to Answer	72

AGE

Age Group	Number of Respondents
18-24	57
25-34	142
35-44	131
45-54	116
55-64	99
65+	52
Prefer not to answer	38

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This appendix provides demographic information for respondents included in the Thrive Profile™ dataset. These figures are intended to offer additional context for the findings presented in this report and reflect only those respondents who answered each demographic item.

TENURE

Length of Time at Organization	Number of Respondents
Less than 1 year	113
1-2 years	91
2-3 years	78
3-4 yeas	78
4-5 years	38
5+ years	191
Prefer not to answer	46

ETHNICITY

Ethnicity	Number of Respondents
Hispanic/Latinx	34
Non-Hispanic/Latinx	529
Prefer not to Answer	72

APPENDIX D.
Additional Methodology Details: Analytical Approach

Findings in this report were generated using a multi-level averaging approach, also referred to as hierarchical aggregation. First, each respondent's item-level responses were averaged to generate subcategory scores. These respondent-level scores were then averaged to produce organization-level results. Finally, organization-level results were aggregated to generate regional and national estimates. This approach was used to ensure that the findings reflect both individual worker experience and organizational patterns, without allowing larger organizations to disproportionately shape the overall results.

As a result, the estimates presented here are best understood as reflecting the typical experience within and across participating organizations, rather than a purely respondent-weighted national average. Benchmark comparisons referenced in this report are based on the internal Thrive Profile™ dataset. The analysis includes comparisons by tenure, role type, and age, and incomplete responses were excluded. Findings highlighted in this report were identified using a more conservative statistical threshold than may be used in applied interpretation or recommendation development.

The quantitative survey data were examined using descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, and multiple regression analyses, along with a combination of repeated-measures ANOVAs, one-way ANOVAs, two-way ANOVAs, independent-samples t-tests, and planned pairwise t-tests. Tukey HSD post hoc comparisons were used in selected age and tenure analyses, and Bonferroni corrections were applied to planned pairwise comparisons when multiple within-domain subcategory tests were conducted. In the individual domain, a Friedman test was also used to confirm that repeated subcategory means were not equal before follow-up comparisons were interpreted. An alpha level of 0.05 was used to determine statistical significance for the analyses described in this report. These tests were used to examine differences across Thrive Profile™ subcategories, differences by age, tenure, role, and region, selected interaction effects, and relationships between wellbeing measures and eNPS. In addition, multiple regression analyses were conducted on respondent-level averages to identify the strongest predictors of individual, team, and organizational burnout, as well as overall worker experience as reflected by eNPS.

Because this approach involves averaging at multiple levels, the final results reflect the typical experience within and across organizations, rather than a purely respondent-weighted national average. Additionally, this report uses strict statistical testing; practical applications and recommendations may use less stringent criteria.