



# AXA Mind Health Report

THE 2026 EDITION

GLOBAL DATA, TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

AI can open the door to support, but it must be shaped by clinically grounded tools from trusted health players that guide people toward the right human support when it matters most - because ultimately AI can never replace human connection.

Patrick Cohen,  
CEO AXA Europe & Health



### How is the world doing mentally in 2026?

We've been tracking Mind Health for more than half a decade and it's now at its lowest point: almost half the population surveyed is not doing well, with young people hit even harder. The main drivers remain financial strain, work stress, uncertainty about the future, but digital habits intensify the pressure - people now spend more than 5 hours on screens outside of work and 2 in 3 say it negatively affects their daily life. The main barrier to getting help is internal: too many people still don't seek professional support because they don't consider their situation serious enough. Raising awareness, fostering debate and providing solutions remains crucial and at AXA, we want to play our part.

### Are AI tools helping or hurting?

AI could be one of the biggest breakthroughs in mind health - but without guardrails, also one of the biggest risks. On the one hand, AI democratizes access - it's free, immediate, available 24/7 - and is already part of people's emotional lives with 6 in 10 using it to seek mental health advice. But the risks are real: many apply advice that is not medically validated, and almost 1 in 3 say AI has led them to harmful behavior.

What is also worrying is a shift in trust - away from friends, family and healthcare professionals, towards machines. AI can open the door to support, but it must be shaped by clinically grounded tools from trusted health players that guide people toward the right human support when it matters most - because ultimately AI can never replace human connection.

### What role should employers play — and how does AXA support them?

Employers have a responsibility to be part of the solution. Employees expect support, but many companies are still lagging behind: more than 8 in 10 employees would join support programs at work yet two thirds say support is absent or unknown. At AXA, we help companies close this gap through concrete, medically validated solutions - for example through the Mind Health Self Check, a tool which helps spot wellbeing trends and target the right support, and the Mind Health Odyssey, an online training platform to build mental health literacy for managers and teams. Companies that equip their people with tools to take care of themselves will see fewer sick days, higher retention and more productive teams. The need for support has never been greater, so let's act on it together!

# 5 key learnings from the survey

**1.** Despite increased attention, mind health distress keeps growing.

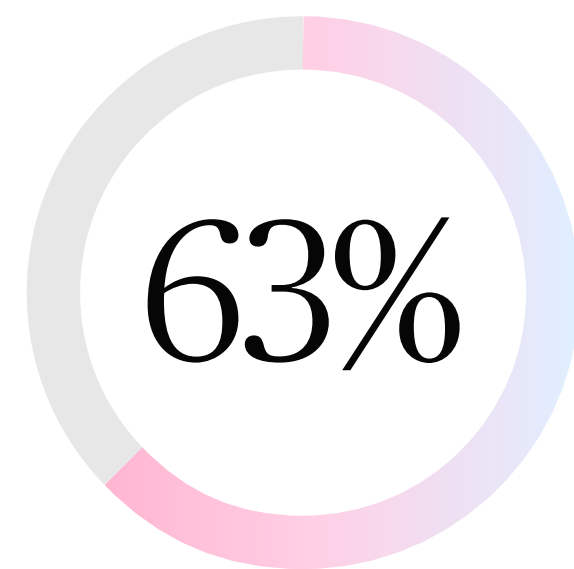
 +6 pts

people who are struggling or languishing compared to 2021

Awareness around mind health has never been higher, yet the number of people who are flourishing or even getting by continues to fall. Overall, 10 out of the 16 countries surveyed recorded their lowest results in mind health since the Index began in 2021.

→ P. 5

**2.** AI is proving to be a double-edged sword for supporting mind health.

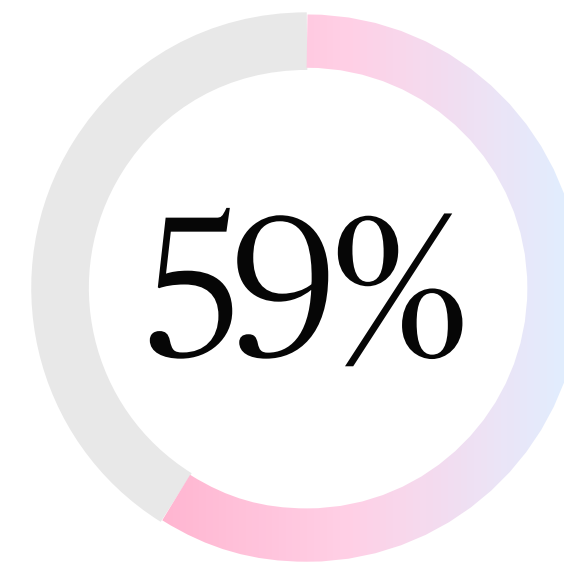


say they have already used AI in relation to their mind health

AI advice brings real benefits, but there are risks too. Although platforms raise literacy, high numbers of people are trusting AI-generated content over professional advice. Digital habits also contribute to feelings of loneliness and isolation.

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**3.** Young adults remain on the front line of mind health challenges.

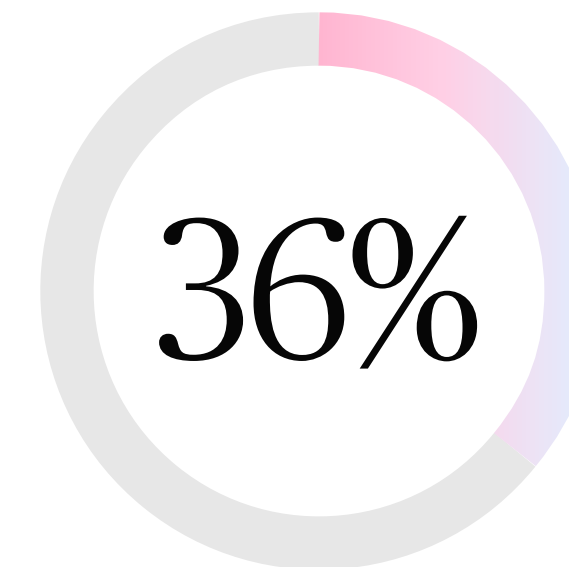


are languishing or struggling – that’s 13% more than the global average

The mind health epidemic among people aged between 18 and 34 years old shows no sign of shifting. However, there are encouraging signs that young adults are more open to talking about their mind health challenges and seeking help.

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**4.** Lack of awareness is still the Number 1 barrier to mind health.

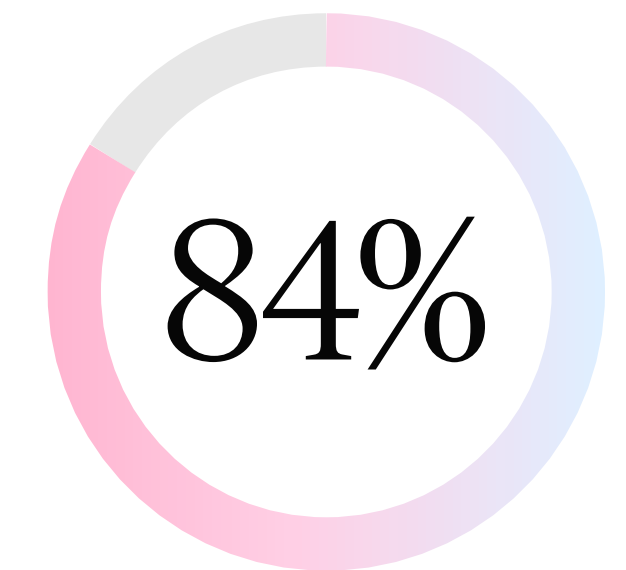


believe they don't need medical help

The primary obstacles to better mind health – including cost, time, stigma and access to practitioners – varied across age groups and geographies. In total, 60% of respondents said they hadn’t visited a healthcare professional for support over the previous 12 months.

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**5.** Companies can expand the conversation around mind health.



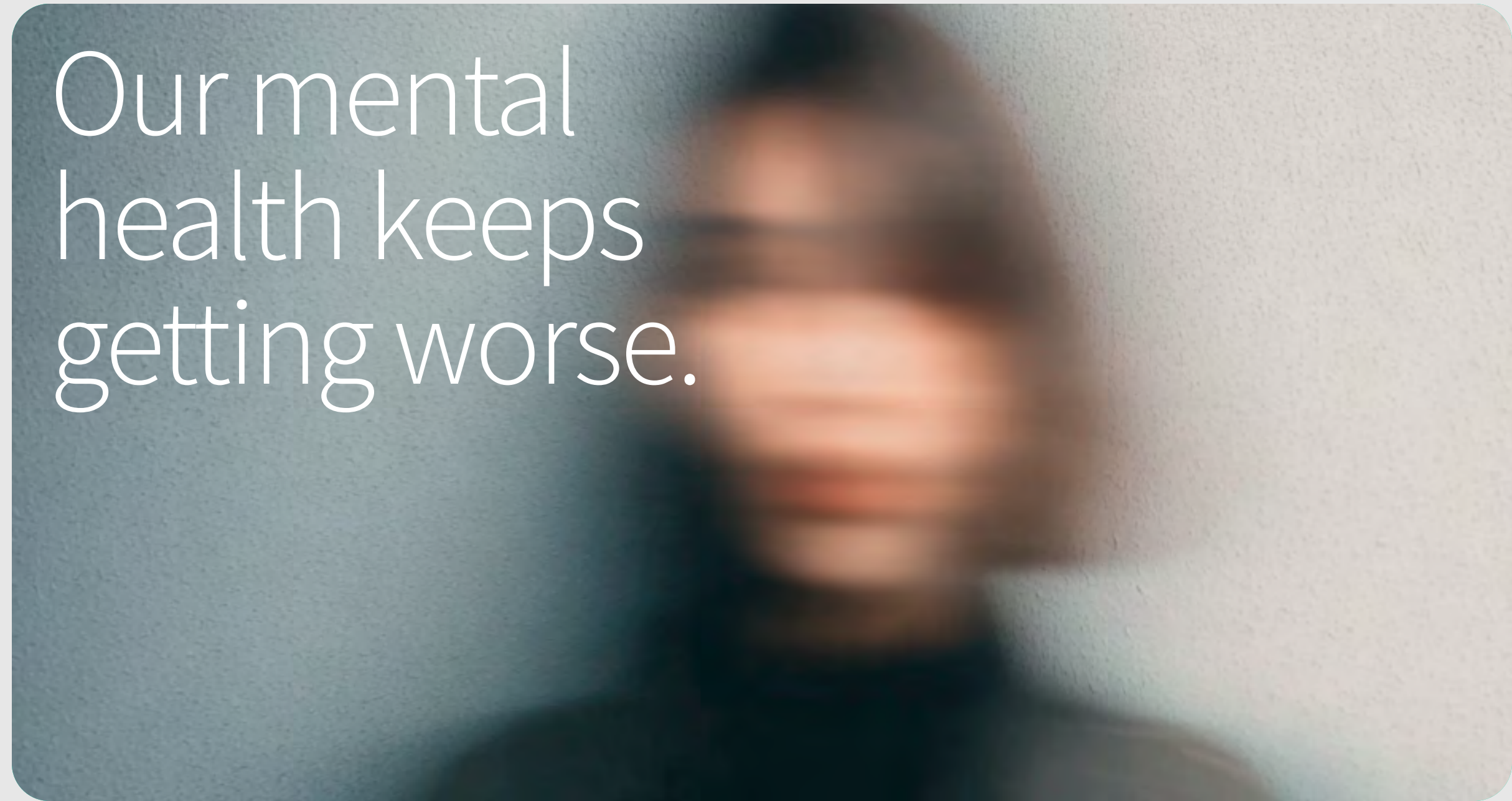
of employees expect mind health support from their employer

Workplaces can play a pivotal role in improving mind health by bridging the gap between employees’ need for and openness to help. They can encourage colleagues to discuss mental health challenges at work and also raise awareness around policies.

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# 1. The state of mental health worldwide



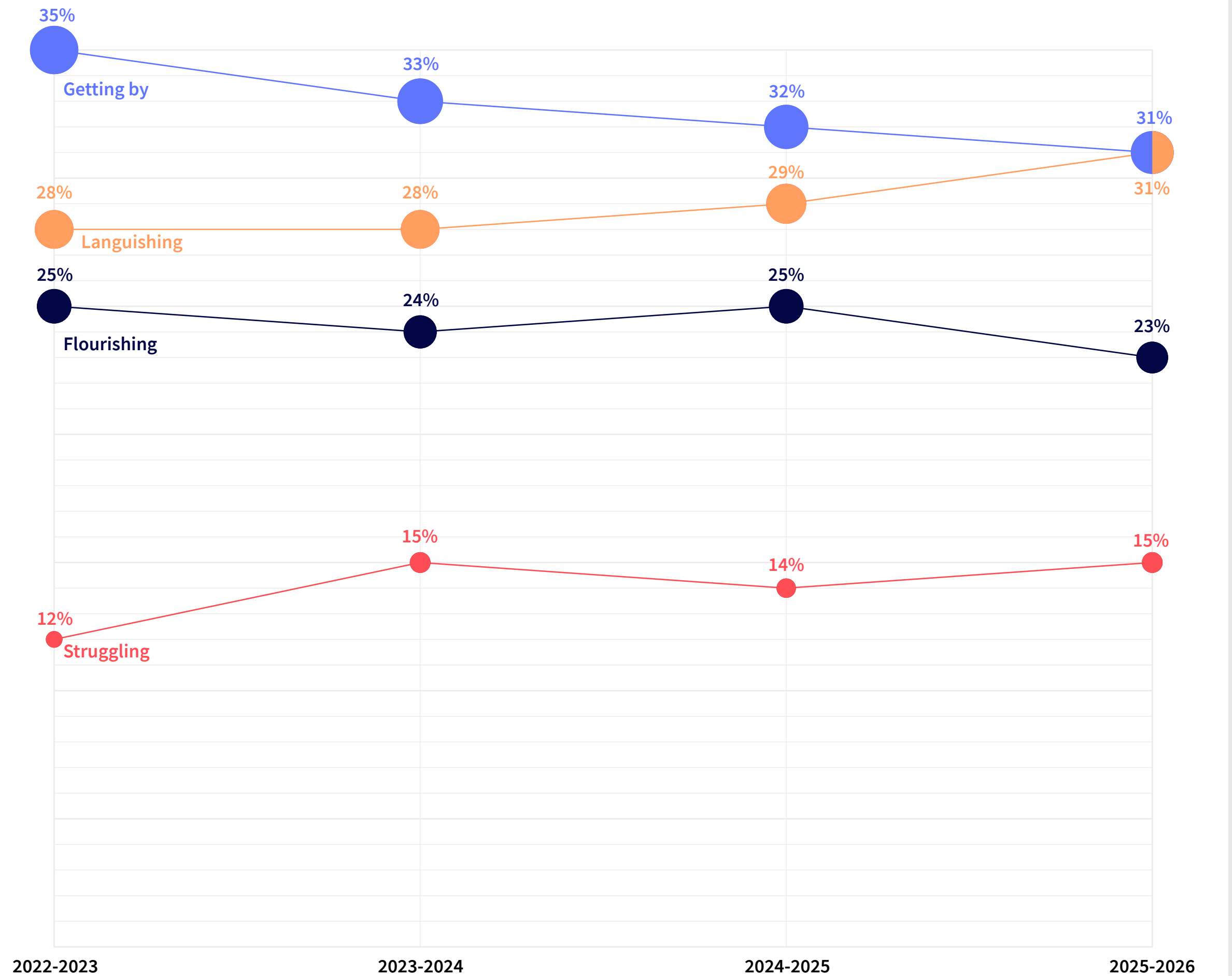
Despite the growth in awareness, global mental health remains a major concern. Indeed, people around the world now identify mental health as a higher priority than cancer.

While the total numbers of those struggling and languishing showed signs of stabilizing in 2023-2024, the findings reveal a 3-point rise in the last year reaching 46%.

At the same time, there are fewer people flourishing today at the pinnacle of mental health than there were in 2022.



**46%**  
of people are languishing / struggling (+6pts since 2022)



● **Flourishing:** It represents the pinnacle of mental health, encompassing the presence of good social, psychological and emotional wellbeing.

● **Getting by:** It describes those who may have some areas of good wellbeing but not enough to reach the state of flourishing.

● **Languishing:** It represents the absence of positive wellbeing. If you are languishing you are not functioning at full capacity, you may feel unmotivated and struggle to focus.

● **Struggling:** The absence of wellbeing in most areas is likely to result in struggle and difficulty. Struggling is associated with emotional distress and psychosocial impairment.



## What's the main evolution you can see in the Mind Health Index since its launch?



A troubling paradox lies at the heart of modern progress. Despite robust economic growth and remarkable technological advancement, mental wellbeing is worsening: the share of people struggling or languishing has risen over the last half decade from 40% to 46%.

The causes are counterintuitive. Hyper-connectivity has not cured loneliness — it has deepened it, particularly among the young. Economic expansion has not delivered stability for individuals — anxiety over jobs and financial stability persist. We know that real human contact is irreplaceable, yet we surrender five hours daily to screens.

The conversation, at least, is opening up. And cautious optimism is warranted. Technology, properly deployed, may yet form part of the remedy.


The question remains to what extent societies and individuals can focus their effort and discipline to harness technology in a way that strengthens their mental resilience.

**Claudio Gienal,**  
Chief Transformation Officer  
AXA Europe & Health



One of the stark figures from this year’s Index is the 26% of respondents potentially affected by depression, anxiety or stress (DASS) at severe or more extreme levels. The 3-point rise since 2022 represents a worrying trend, given the significant social and economic burdens associated with this “silent epidemic”.

The number of people who self-report a mental health condition has fallen a point to 31% over the last year, however that is still a 4-point rise since 2022.



# 26%

are potentially affected by **depression, anxiety or stress** at severe or more extreme levels

DEPRESSION



14%

at severe or more extreme levels

ANXIETY



5%

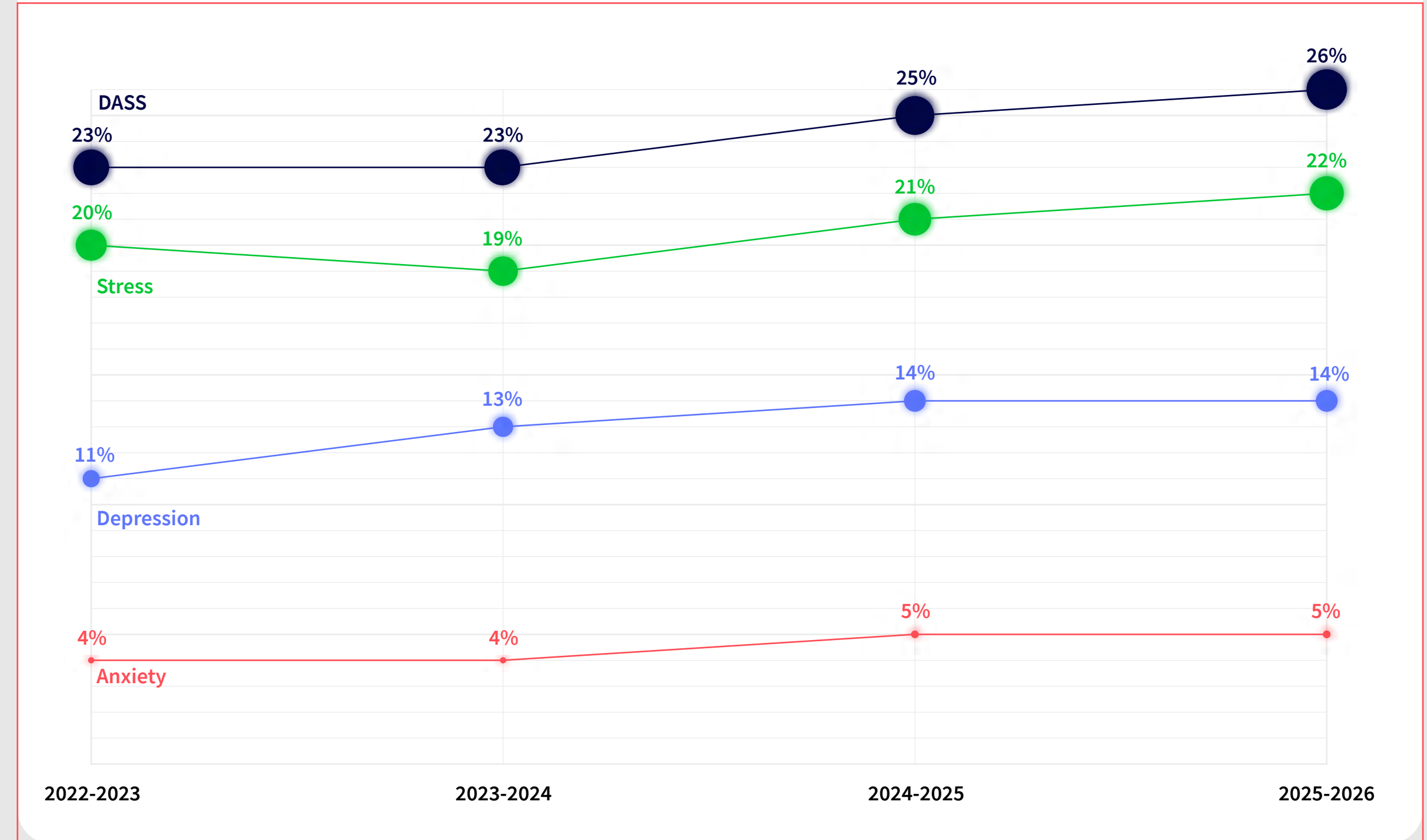
at severe or more extreme levels

STRESS



22%

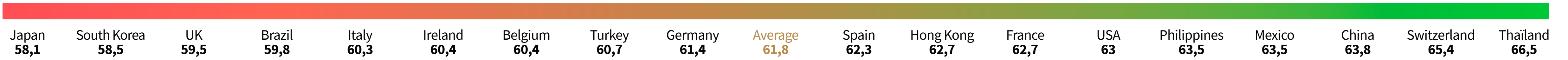
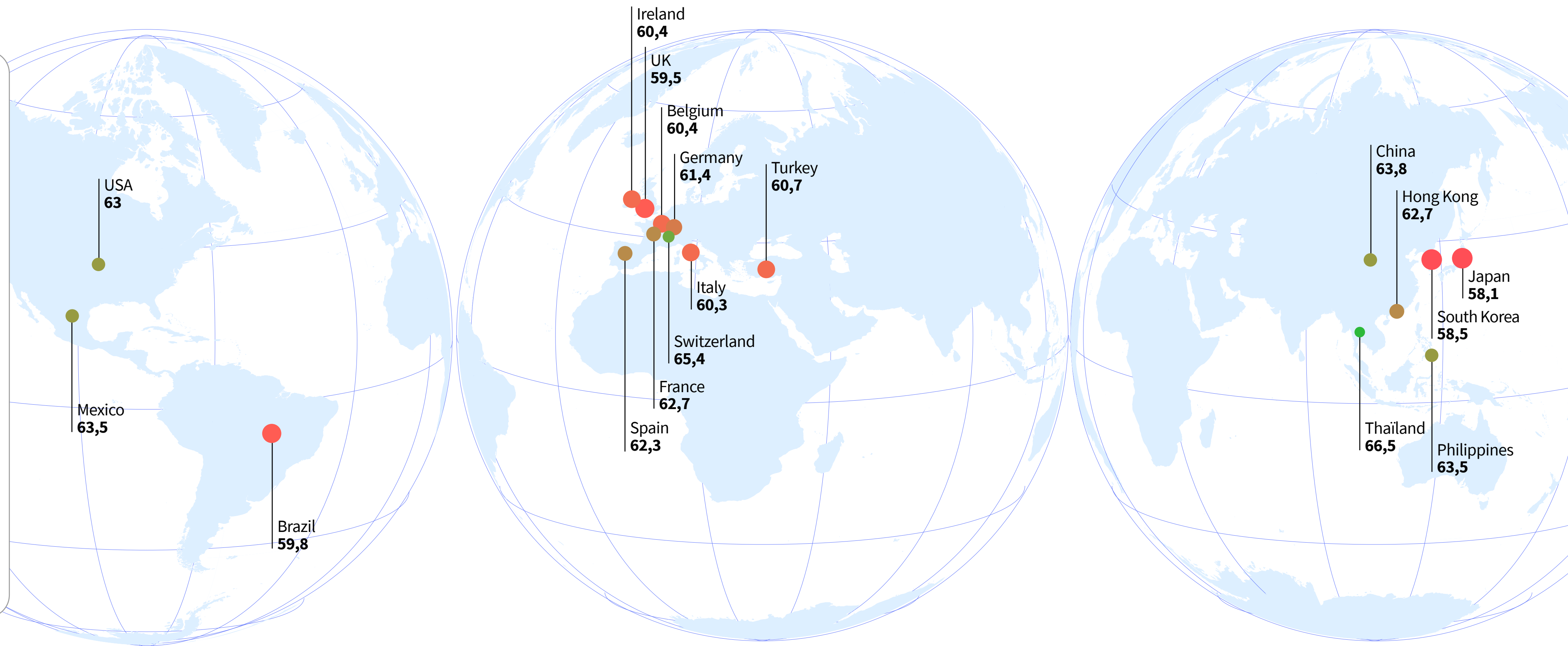
at severe or more extreme levels



# How are countries ranking on mental health issues?

The AXA Mind Health Index shows an overall decline in mental health across the world; however the needle shifts considerably at a local level. For example, in Thailand, at the top of the Index, just 6% of the population are struggling with their mental health, compared to 22% in the UK at the bottom.

Switzerland has the highest percentage of people who are flourishing (32%), while neighboring Italy has one of the lowest number at the pinnacle of mental health with just 15%.



# Young people are dramatically more exposed to mental health disorders.

This year's continued decline in mental health among young people reflects a pattern widely reported in post-pandemic research, whereby 18- to 34-year-olds are showing higher levels of severe symptoms related to depression, anxiety and stress.

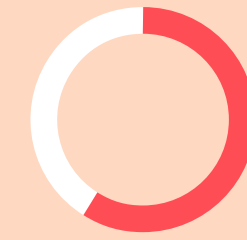
Almost all of the reported risk factors related to mental health (world instability, climate anxiety, rapid work and technologies transformations) impact young adults more than other age categories.

In particular, they report excessive use of digital (16 points above the average), fear of missing out in social media (+17 points), loneliness and social isolation (+13 points) as detrimental to their wellbeing.



# 59%

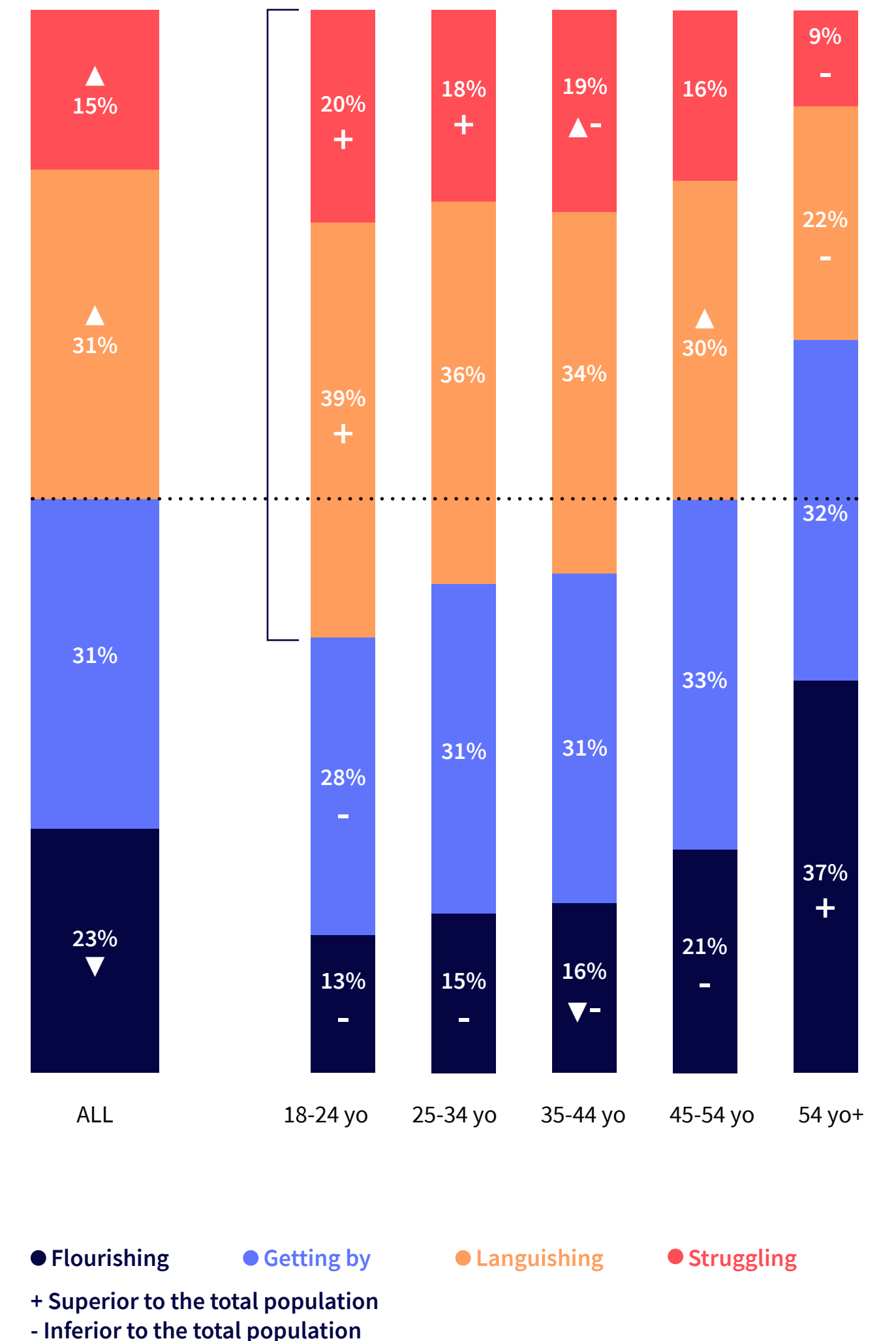
18-24 y.o. are struggling or languishing (+13 points above average population)



# 2.3x

Young adults under 35 are more than twice as likely to receive a severe diagnosis of depression, anxiety or stress

Mind Health Index by age group



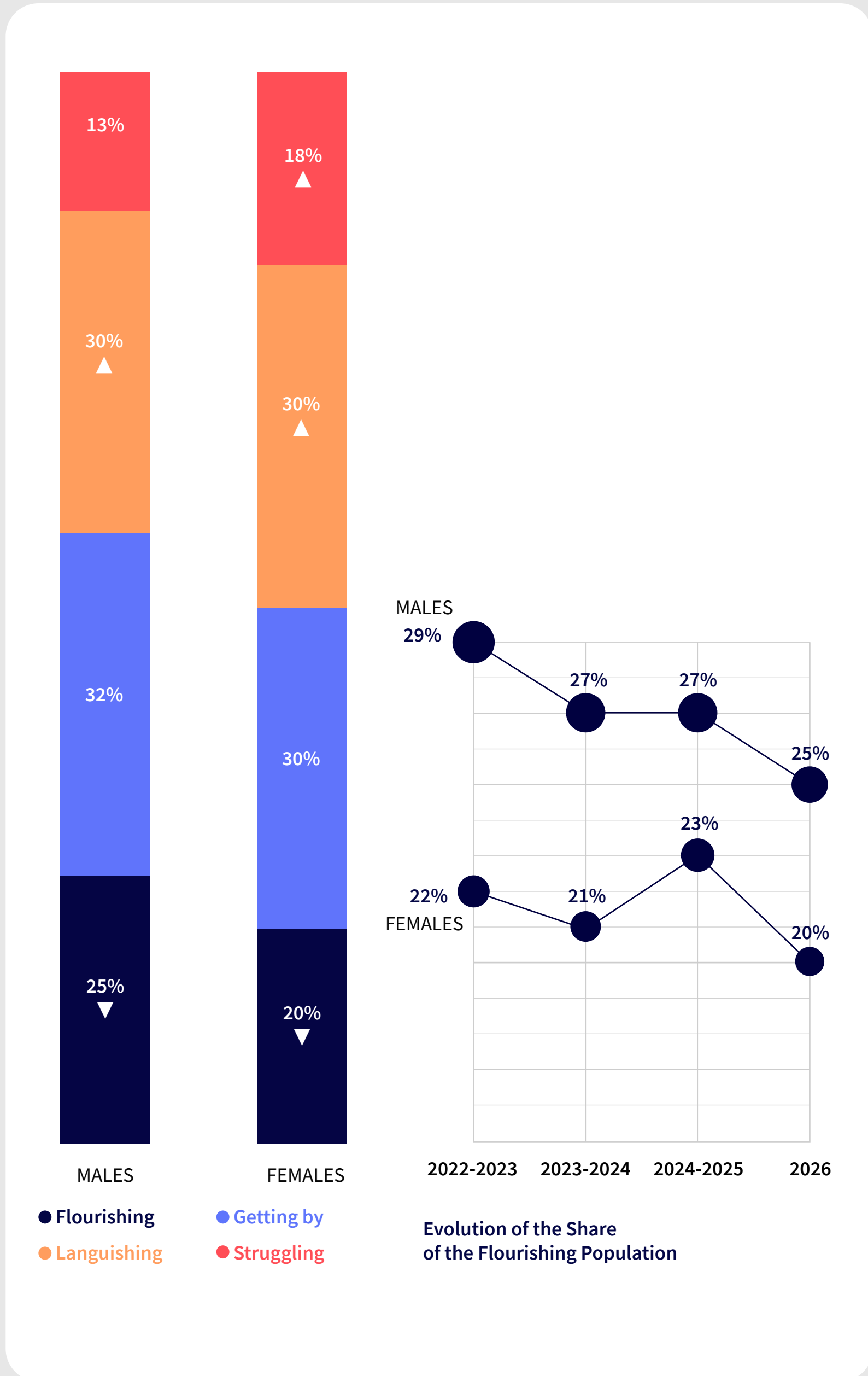


A gender gap that remains significant, but is narrowing.

Women's mental health remains worse than men's across every metric in this year's AXA Mind Health Index – and has continued to drop below levels reported in 2022.

Men's mental health has also declined, to the extent that the gap between the genders is closer than ever. There is now a 5-point split in the ratio of flourishing men to women, compared to a 7-point gap in 2022.

Among those potentially affected by depression, anxiety or stress at severe or more extreme levels, the gap has shortened from 5 points to just 3.



# Always online, increasingly alone.

Isolation as a result of digital habits is especially prevalent among young people, who see a strong correlation between screen usage and mental distress. Screen time for those under 34 stretches to 6 hours a day on average, and they are twice as likely to experience loneliness compared to the over 55s, who watch screens for 4 hours.



**5.1 hours**

on average per week day on a screen for personal activities = approx. 55 days in a year, or almost 2 months



**75%**

report that their screen time negatively affects their daily lives, at least moderately



**40%**

report feeling lonely at least some of the time over the last two weeks



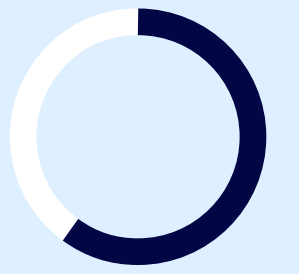
Challenge #1:  
Creating meaningful  
awareness

Too few people in need of support engage with healthcare professionals.



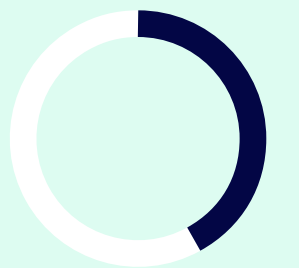
The AXA Mind Health survey has decoded the highest barrier to better mental health – and it is not an external factor. Rather, it is the individual lack of understanding around what constitutes good mental health, the challenges that affect it and recognizing when and where to seek professional medical help.

While attention around mental health has never been higher, the survey shows that even more work must be done to educate the population around the opportunities to improve the way they think and feel.



60%

have never visited a healthcare professional for mental health concerns



42%

agree that “the public healthcare system in their country provides timely support for people with mental health conditions”

# A lack of awareness is still to blame.

## “Stigma still exists”

“Despite the increase in awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of looking after our mental health; lack of self-awareness and stigma still exist.

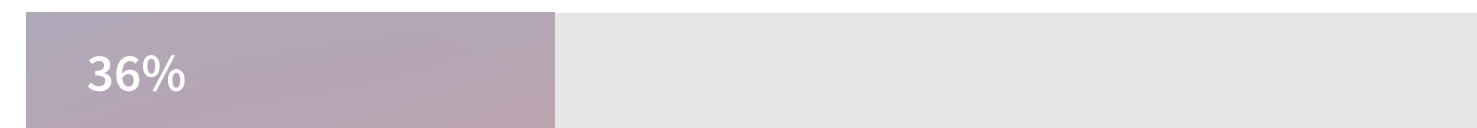
There’s a belief that challenges to mental health don’t warrant medical attention (36% of respondents), even though we know that 46% are languishing or struggling worldwide. It’s a striking differential. Many people think that a health professional won’t be able to treat their struggles (such as anxiety, sleeping problems, mood swings, eating disorders...). However, mind health is equally as important as physical health, and the earlier an individual reaches out for support, the better the outcomes. Early treatment can avoid more complex problems, constant mental pressure and burnout. Across the globe, there has been a noticeable rise in sickness-related absence in the workplace, with employees taking longer periods of time off work with mental health disorders.”

Dr Imren Sterno,  
AXA Health  
medical advisor

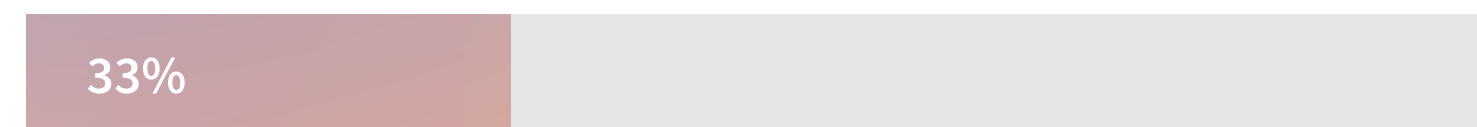


### Top 5 barriers to seeking help from healthcare professionals for mind health support

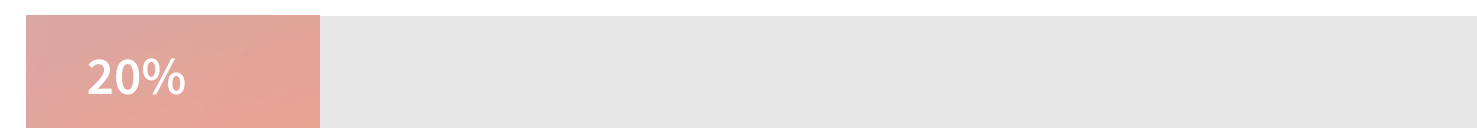
Belief that their condition **does not warrant medical attention**



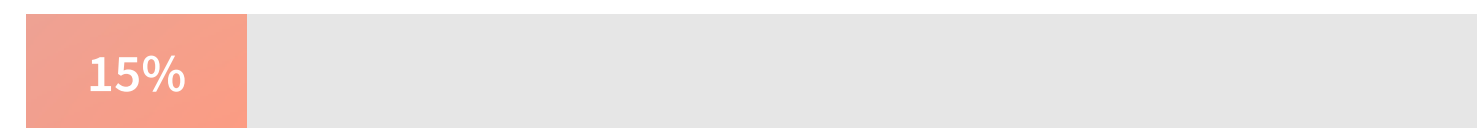
The **cost**



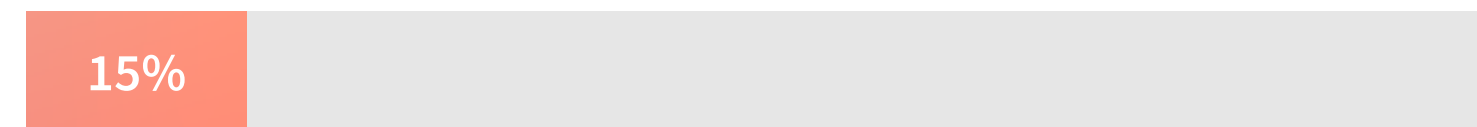
**Time constraints**



Fear of **being stigmatized or judged negatively**



**Limited access** to healthcare professionals



## “Awareness doesn’t always mean understanding”

“People talk more openly about mental health today, and that’s a real step forward. But awareness doesn’t always mean understanding. Many still struggle to recognize what they truly need, or how their personal situation – at home, at work, and in society – shapes their wellbeing. That’s why it’s so important to have honest conversations, not just with professionals but also with colleagues and supervisors, about strengths, limits and expectations. At the same time, care has become more diverse and accessible, which is positive – but also confusing. It’s not always clear which support is right or of good quality. What people really need is a more personal, step-by-step approach that helps them find the right care at the right moment.”



Pr. Lode Godderis,  
AXA Health  
medical advisor



**Angèle Malâtre-  
Lansac,**  
General Delegate of Alliance  
pour la Santé Mentale

## “Fostering awareness: A collective responsibility”

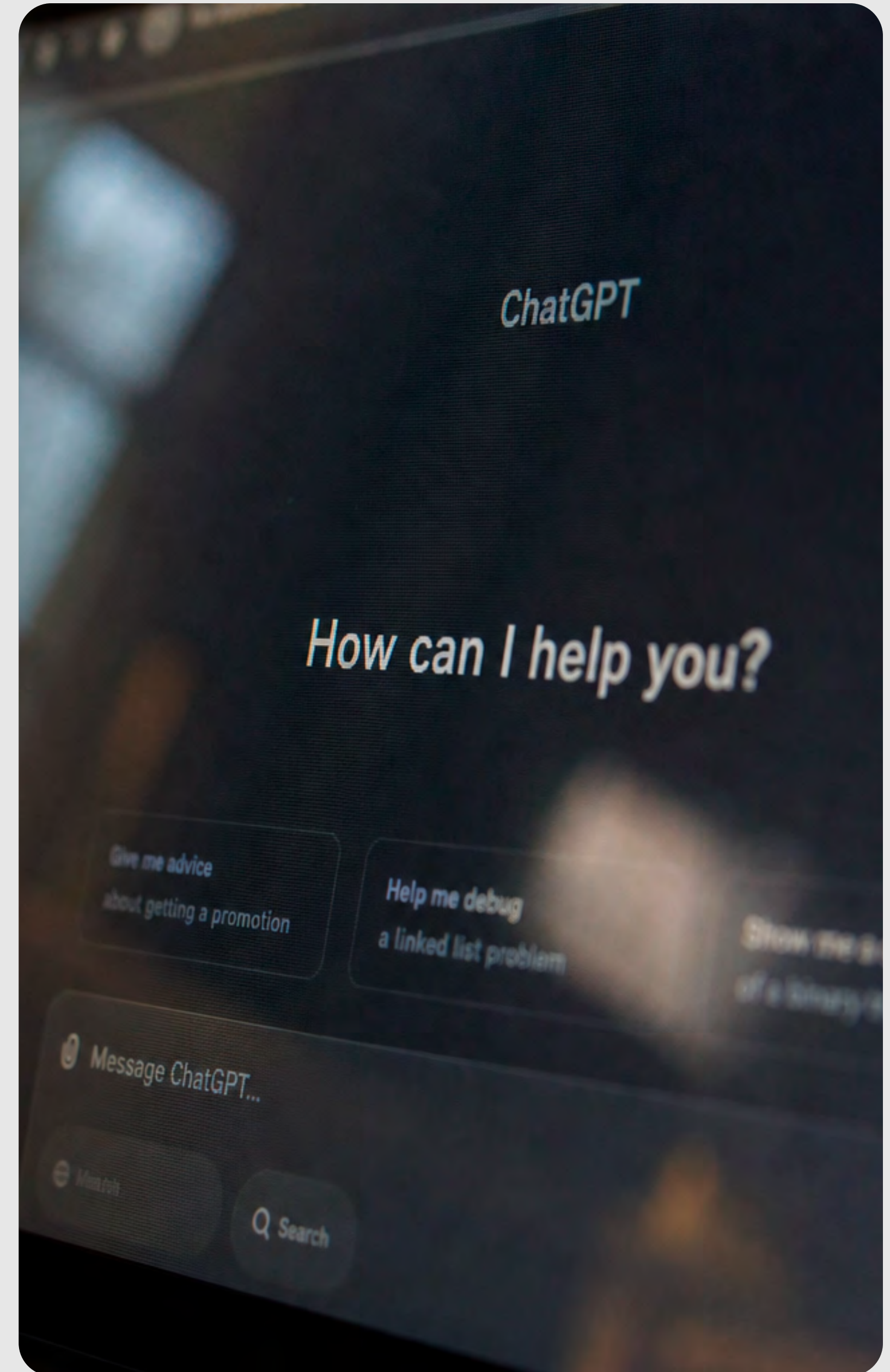
Although society is increasingly willing to engage with mental health, there is still a long way to go. Mental health must be recognized as a collective responsibility – one that calls for action from individuals in their daily lives, as well as from schools, businesses, communities, or public institutions. Alliance pour la Santé Mentale is committed to mobilizing all these actors around a shared conviction: that each of us has a role to play in changing the conversation and fostering a more inclusive, supportive society.

We have reasons to be optimistic. We see companies evolve, with an increasing number of prevention programs that show tangible and lasting impacts. Numerous companies have signed up our Mental Health at Work Charter to improve workplace mental health. We also see innovative NGOs such as Clubhouse, which supports the professional integration of people living with mental health conditions, or Nightline, a peer-to-peer helpline for students that helps break the cycle of isolation.



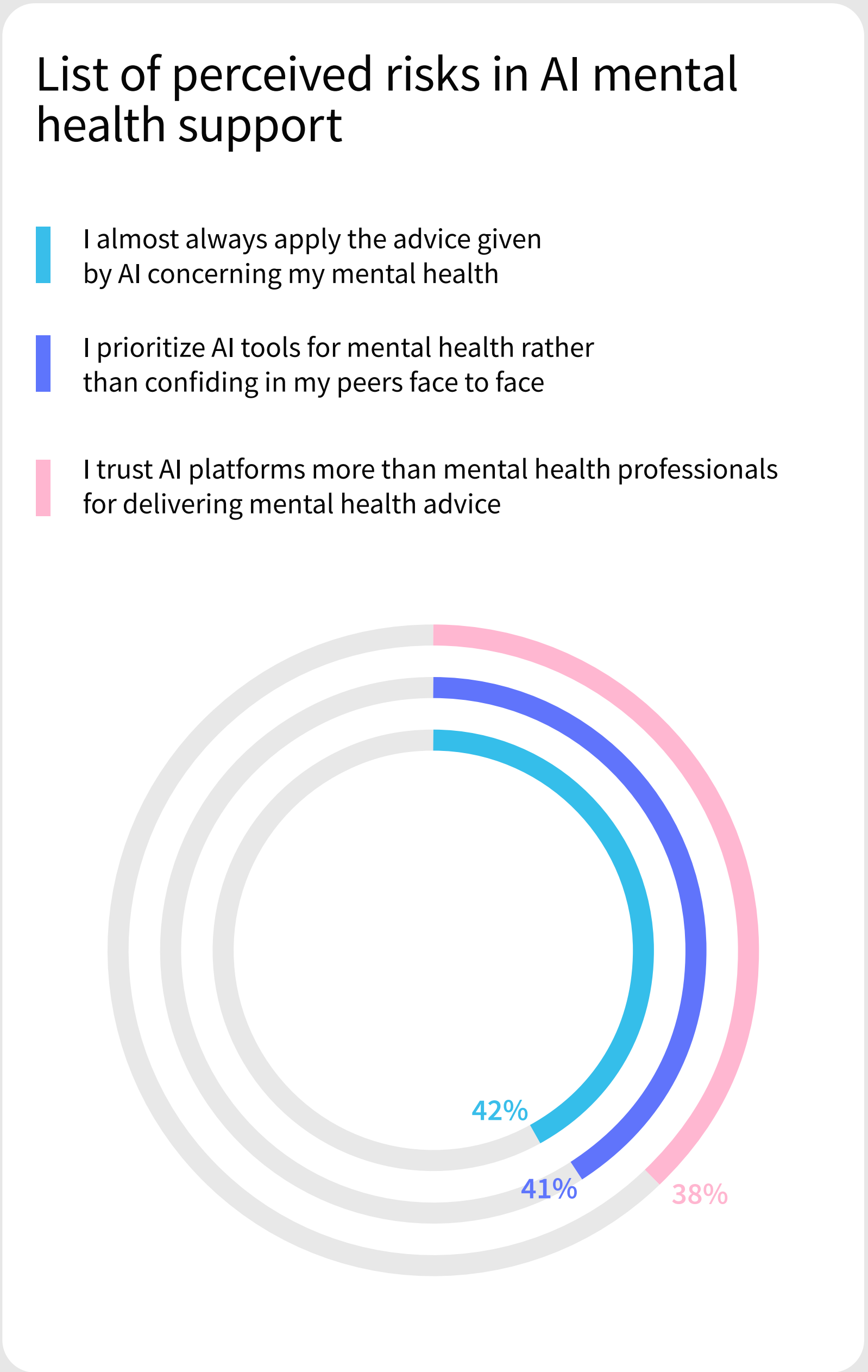
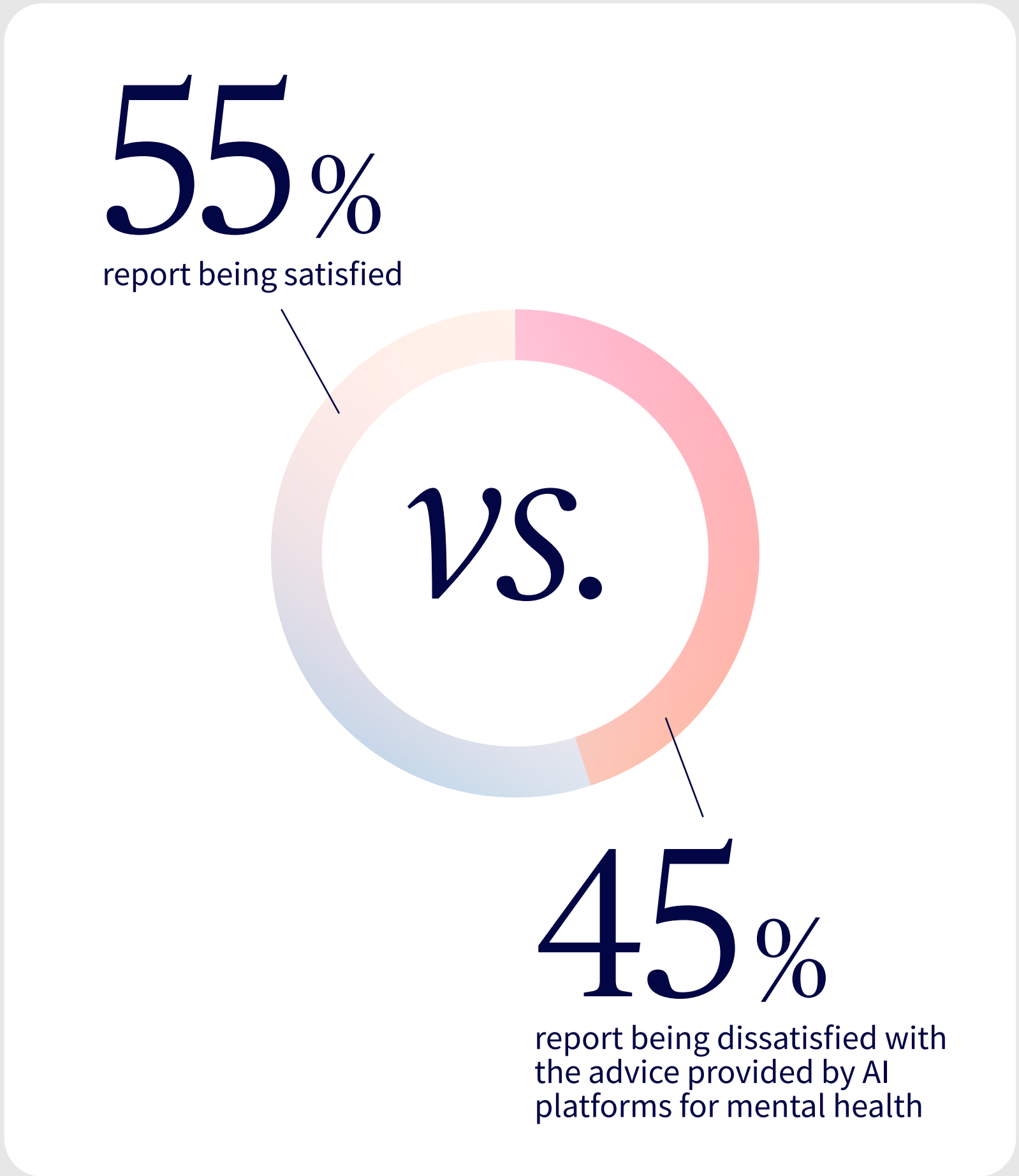
Challenge #2:  
Turning AI into  
a lever of progress

# The expanding use of AI for managing mental health issues.



The fact that more people are turning to AI to deal with mental health challenges proves that there's a real need to find advice and increase knowledge. AI lowers the four main barriers to diagnosis: it is free, available 24/7, immediate and also impersonal, removing any fear of shame.

However, AI can be unhelpful and even damaging. Indeed, 1 out of 3 respondents say they trust AI platforms above mental health professionals, while 28% admit that using AI had led them towards harmful behavior.



# “3 reasons to believe in the positive role of AI in the care pathway”

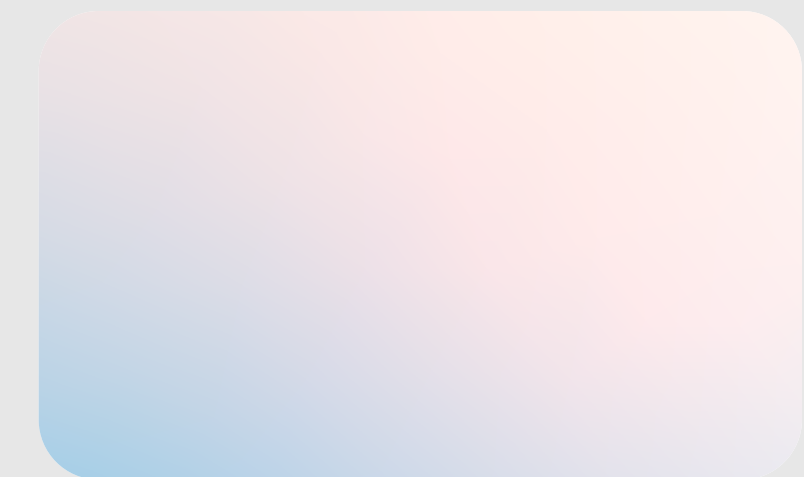
**#1** AI offers game-changing opportunities for mind health. First, it breaks down barriers to access, whether it's fear of judgment, cost or lack of time. In an instant, with ChatGPT, you get confidential, immediate support. The data shows that these technologies serve as an accelerator to seek help.



Clarisse Pamiès,  
Global Head of Health  
Prevention at AXA

**#2** Recent studies demonstrate AI's effectiveness in supporting evidence-based treatments when supervised by clinicians. Most practitioners report their patients' positive feedback, noting that AI can enhance therapy outcomes and extend care. Our data reveals that those seeking professional help for mind health are also the ones most engaged with AI for mind health discussions.

**#3** AI enables earlier intervention, shifting from reactive care to proactive health management. By fostering self-awareness and empowerment, AI helps to catch issues before they get worse. This is good news, especially for caring employers who want to keep their workforce healthy, engaged and performing!





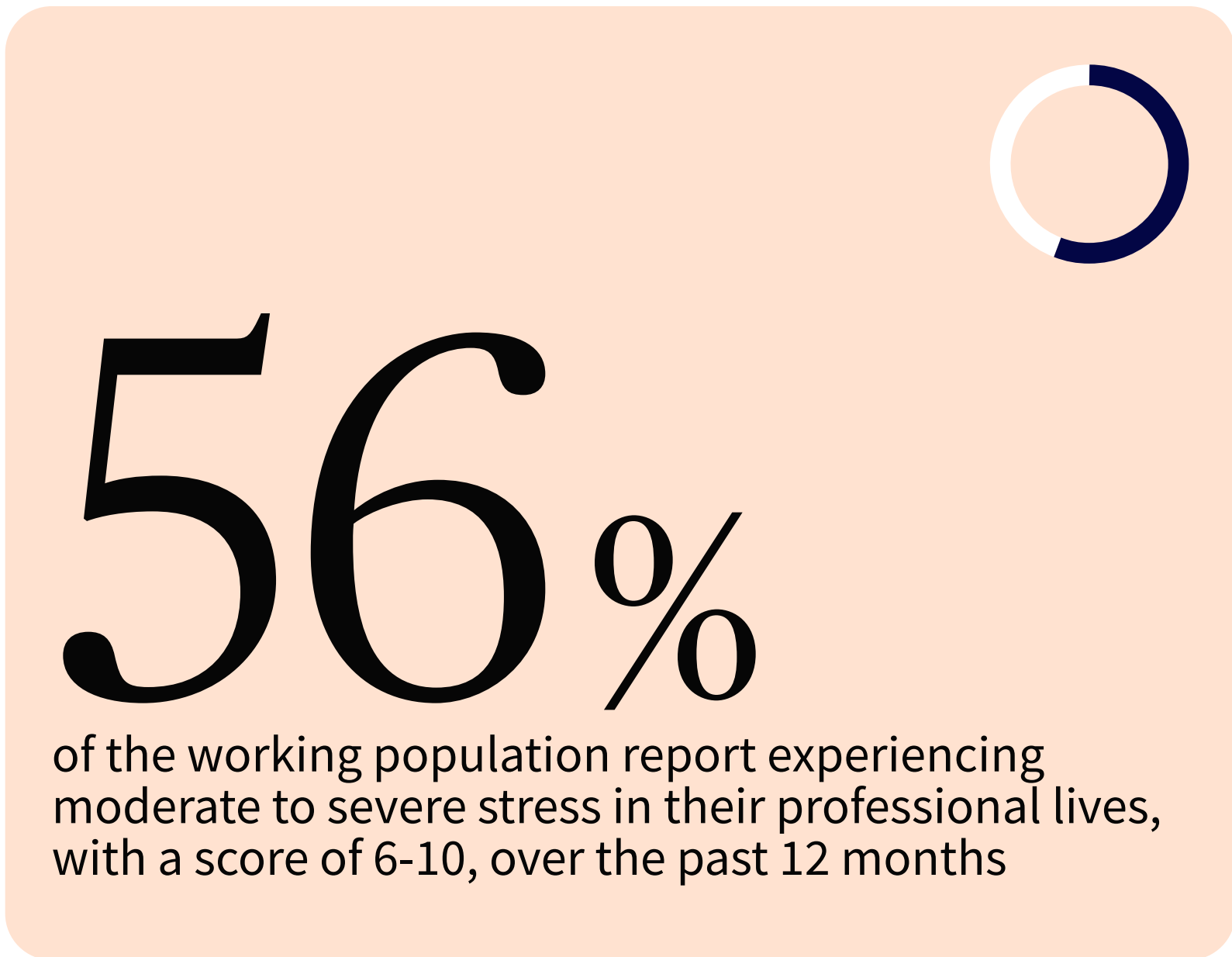
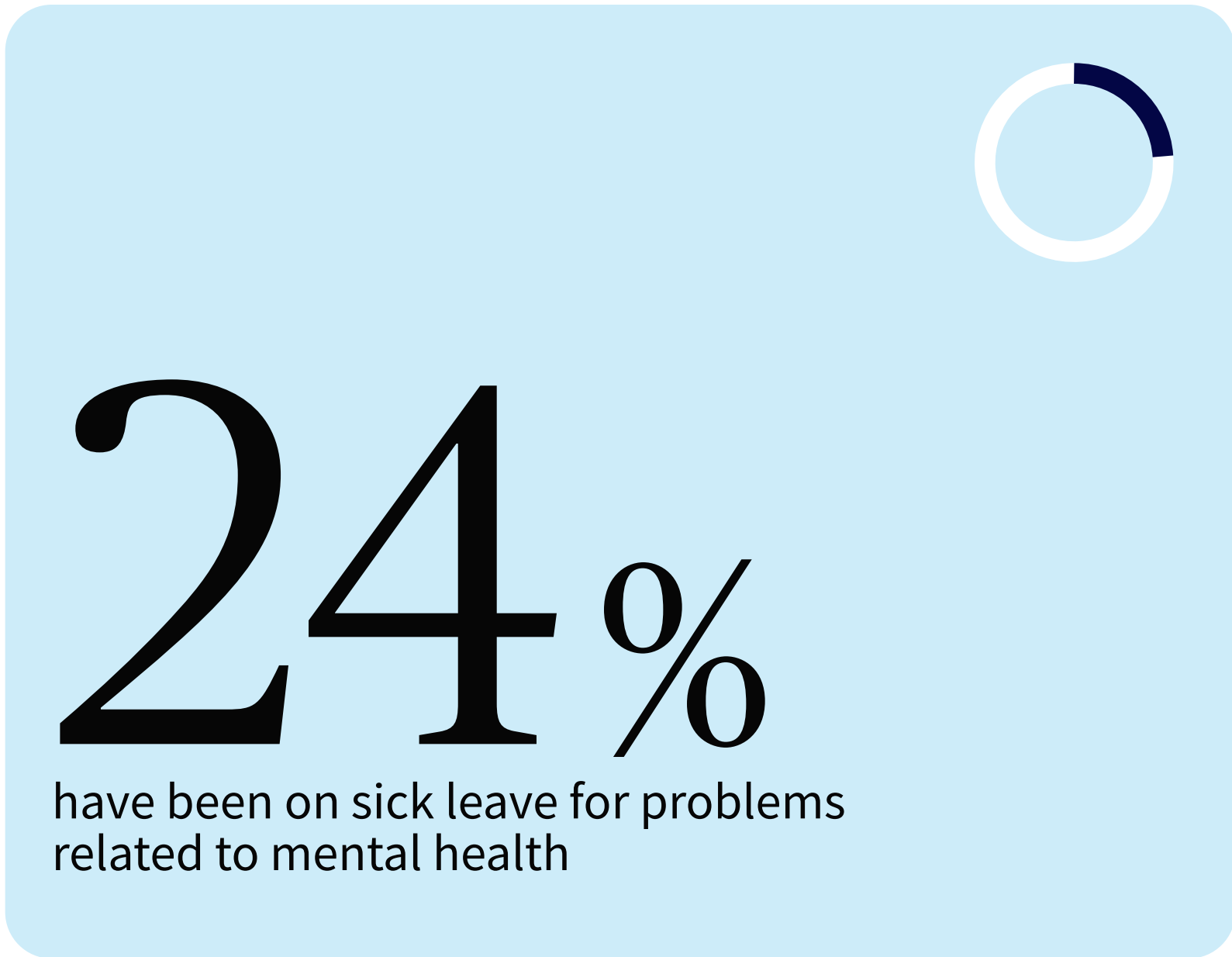
Challenge #3:  
Empowering  
companies to play  
a crucial role



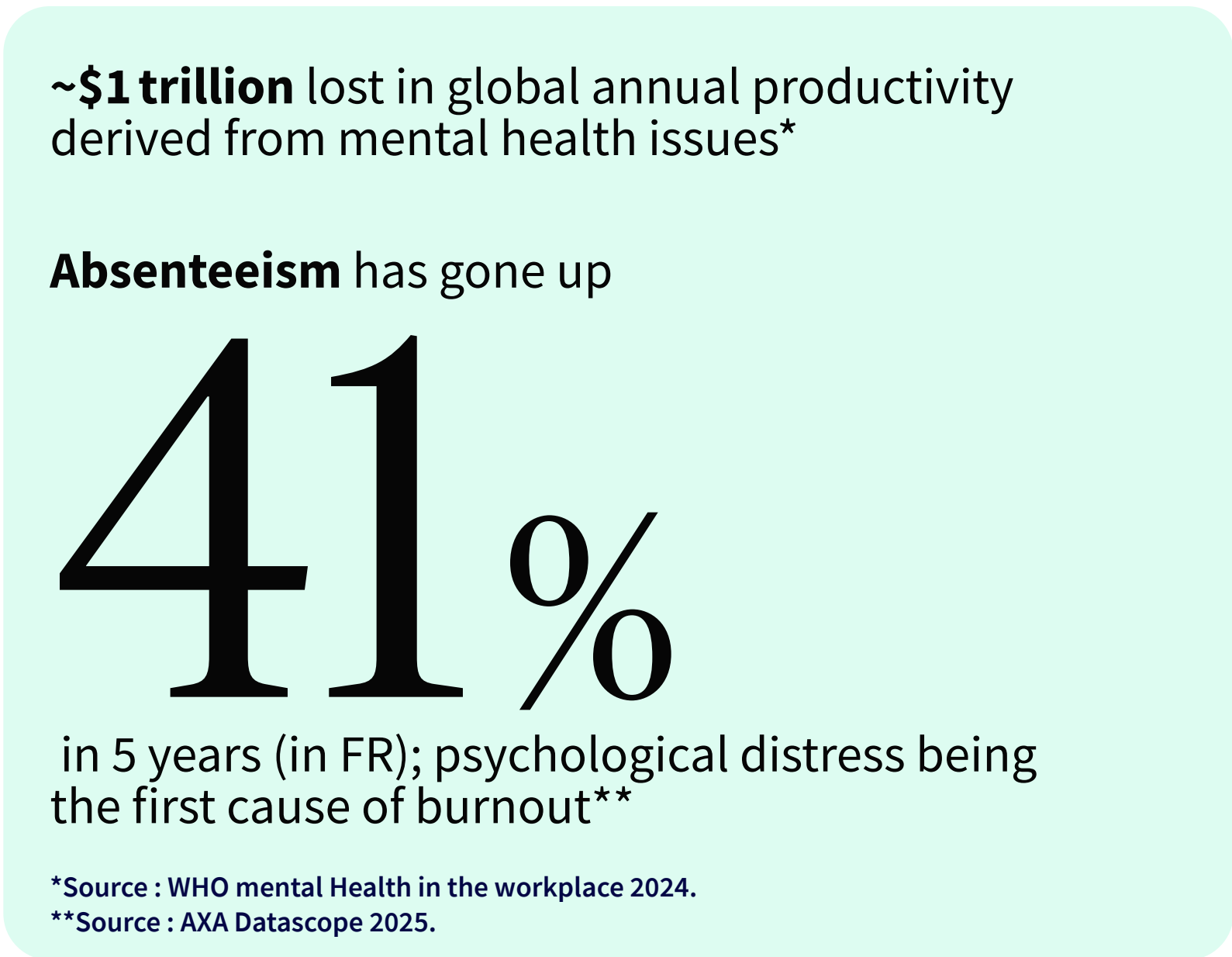
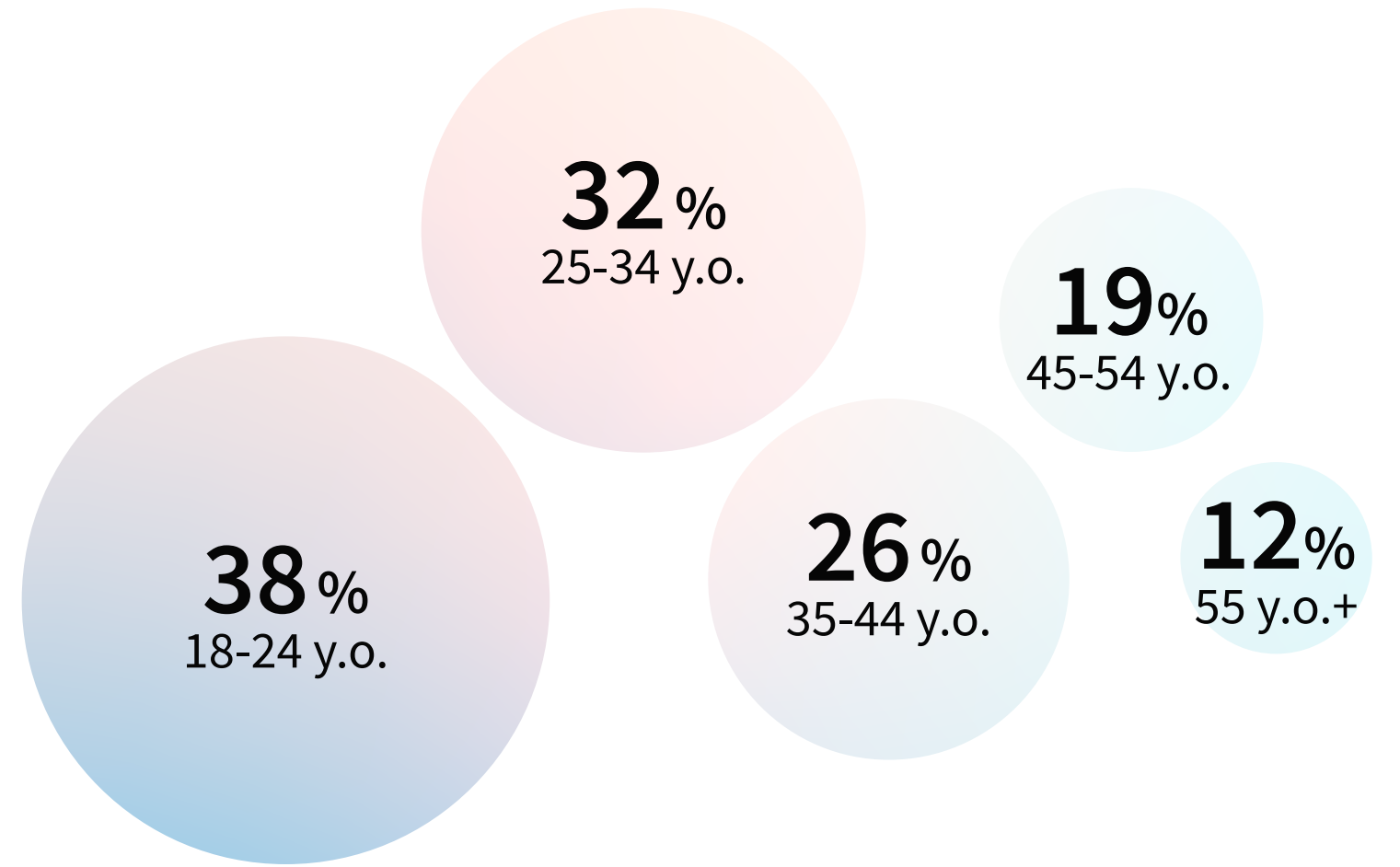
This year’s AXA Mind Health Index shows how much psychological wellbeing affects employees, with 72% of respondents sharing that they suffer from at least one stress-related work impact.

Difficulty sleeping was reported by a third (33%) of employees, while a quarter (24%) said they experienced at least one from increased irritability or mood swings; decreased motivation or productivity; or physical symptoms such as headaches or muscle tension.

Many also referenced the impact of work-related stress outside of work, with 15% avoiding social interaction and 13% struggling with personal relationships.

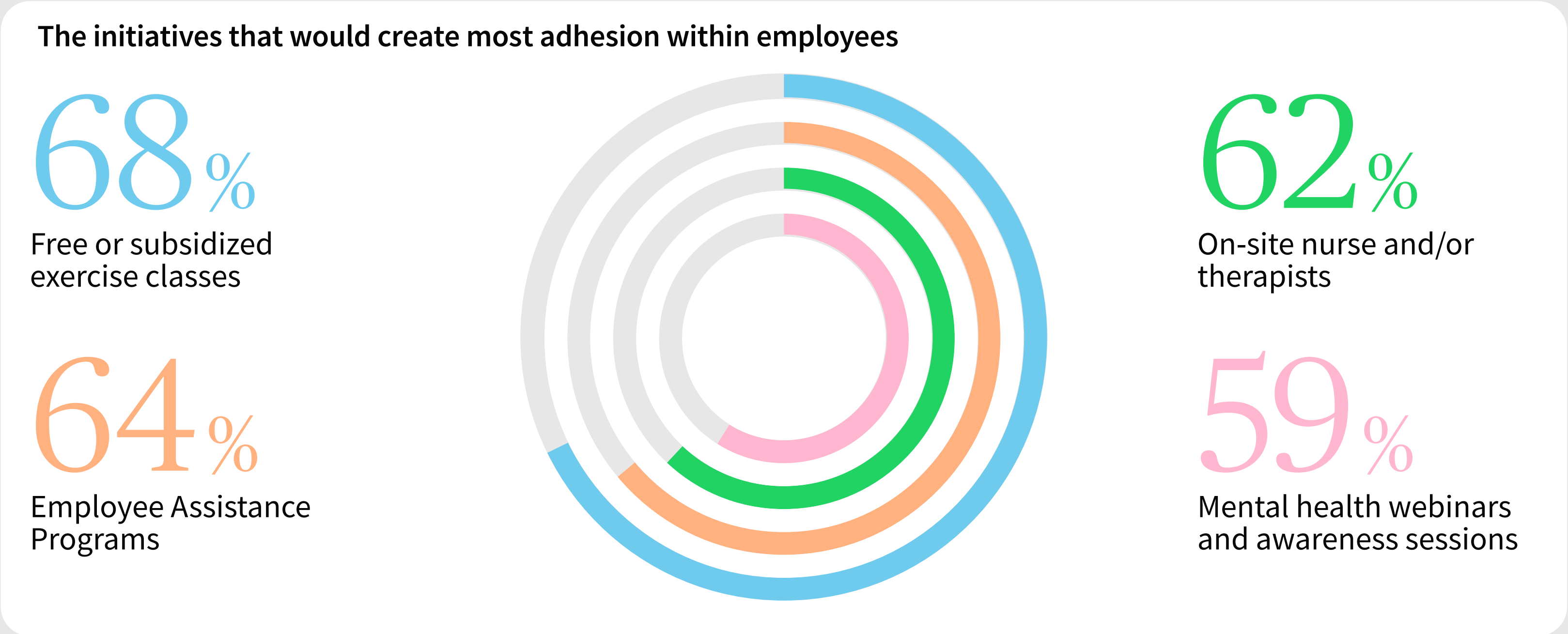
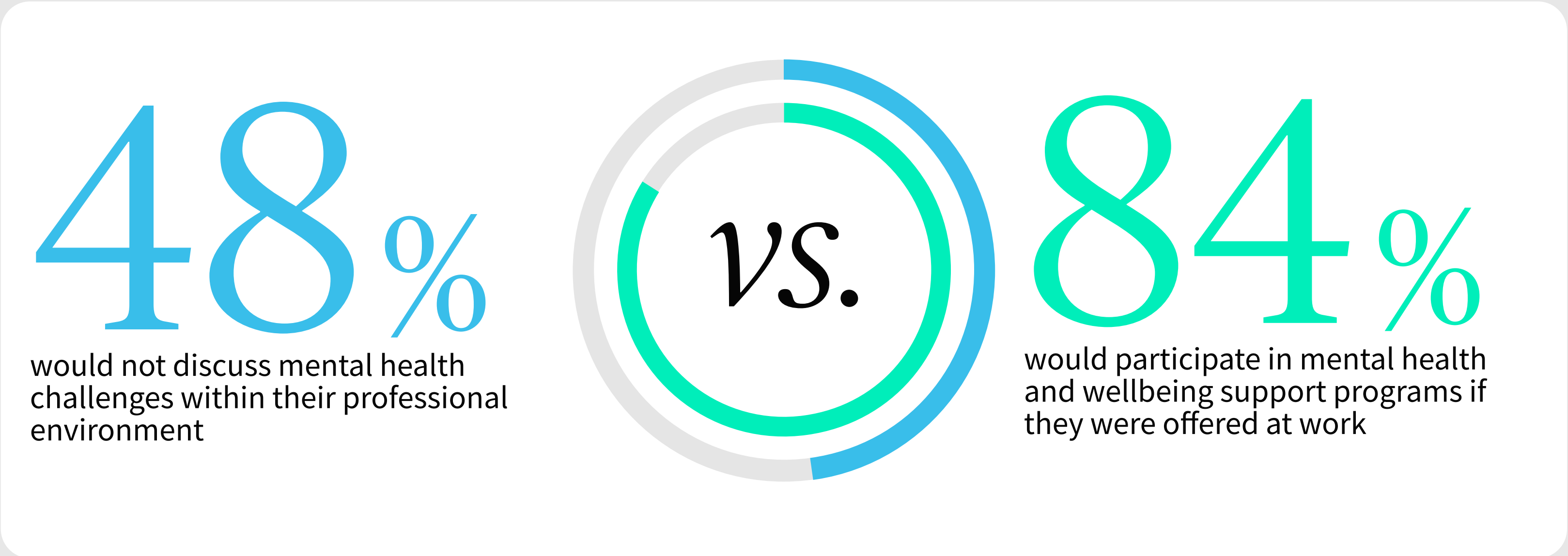


The percentage of the population on sick leave for problems related to mental/psychological health





Companies have an opportunity to reconcile employees' unwillingness to talk openly about their mental health issues with an overwhelming desire to benefit from psychological support in the workplace.





A commentary by  
**Karima Silvent,**  
Deputy Group General and Group HRD

# “Why education and employer action are pivotal to mental health at work”



The 2026 Mind Health Report delivers a sobering message: awareness is rising, but mental health challenges remain widespread - and, in some cases, they are worsening.

Nearly one in two people worldwide (46%) report experiencing mental health issues, with younger generations particularly at risk. Yet information does not automatically translate into action: internal barriers - limited self-awareness and persistent misconceptions - still keep too many people from seeking support.

This is where employers have a decisive role to play. Beyond providing benefits, organizations can build a culture that recognizes mental health realities and actively promotes openness, understanding, and resilience through education, managerial support, and clear pathways to care.

The urgency is amplified as AI and digital tools reshape work and daily life. The risk of loneliness and social disconnection is rising; 92% of young adults say excessive screen time has a negative impact on their everyday lives.

And even when support services exist, stigma and uncertainty often remain. When 43% of employees say their company has no dedicated mental health policy - and 48% find it daunting to initiate such conversations at work - education, trust, and open dialogue are no longer “nice to have”: they are essential.

One practical way to scale education is through accessible learning formats. Our “Mental Health Odyssey” is a one-hour e-learning program designed to raise awareness of mental health at work. Developed in line with World Health Organization guidelines, with input from medical experts and HR professionals, it covers stress, anxiety, burnout, and depression. Through videos, quizzes, and testimonials, it helps reduce taboos, encourage conversations, and contributes to a healthier, more inclusive workplace.

At AXA, we complement this with the “Mind Health Self Check”, a digital tool that helps employees assess their mental well-being and connect with relevant resources.

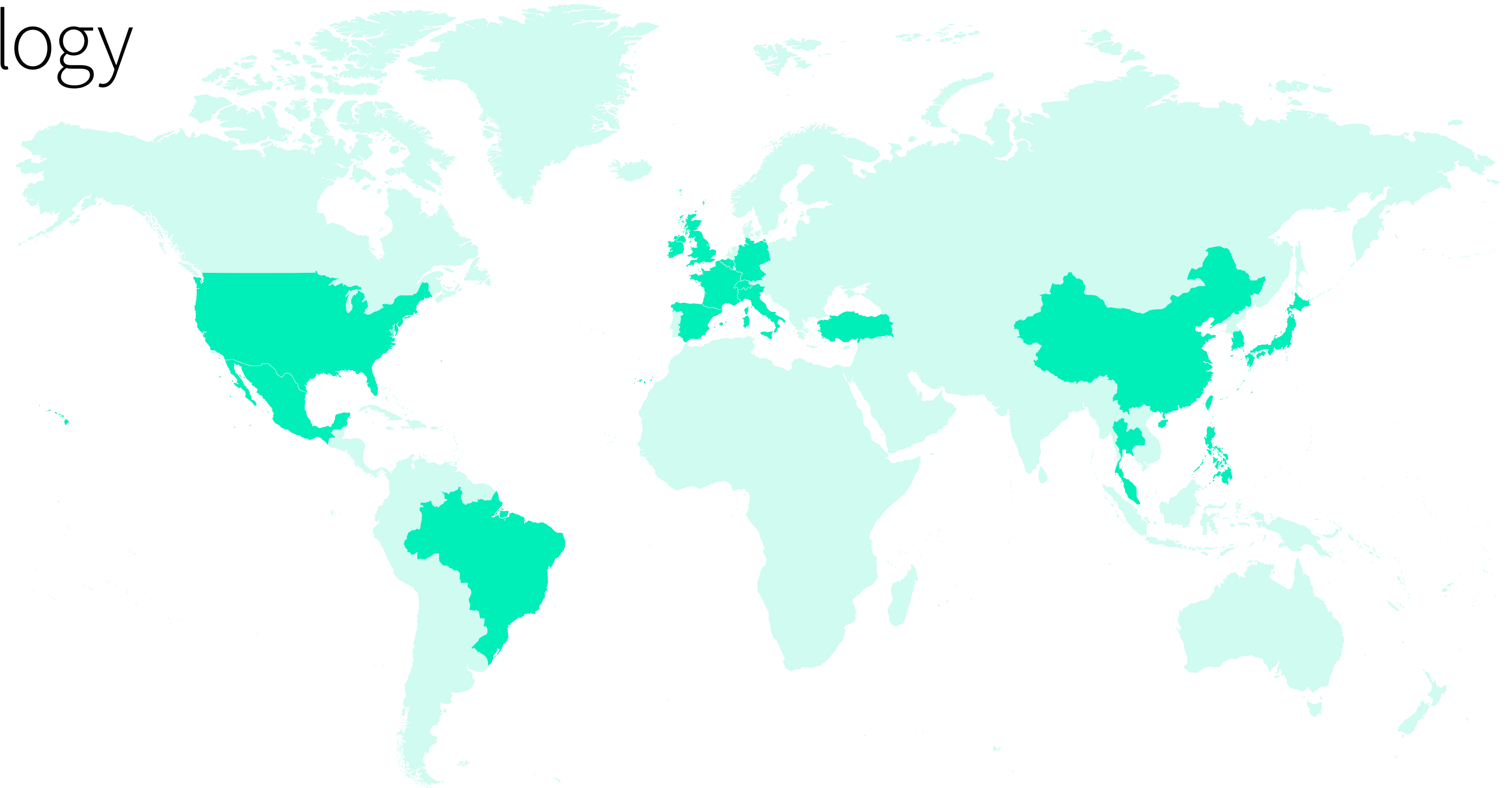
Our experience shows that supporting mental well-being at work requires a comprehensive approach: education, cultural change, and support that is visible and easy to access. Organizations that invest in initiatives such as workshops and sustained communication to normalize these discussions and ensure every employee feels supported strengthen resilience and engagement while demonstrating a genuine commitment to people’s health and long-term performance.

Ultimately, this is at the heart of our motto “Care and Dare for Progress”.

# Study methodology

The AXA Mind Health Index survey is carried out jointly with Ipsos. Online interviews were conducted from January 12<sup>th</sup> to February 16<sup>th</sup> 2026 and in 18 countries.

A quota method was applied to gender, age, occupation and region. Furthermore, the data is weighted so that each country's sample composition best reflects the demographic profile of the adult population (18- 75yo) according to the most recent census data.



18  
countries

19,000  
respondents

18-75  
years old



Let's shift  
the perception  
of mental health.

Learn more  
on [axa.com](https://www.axa.com)

