



Beyond therapy

A strategic guide to revolutionizing
workforce mental health

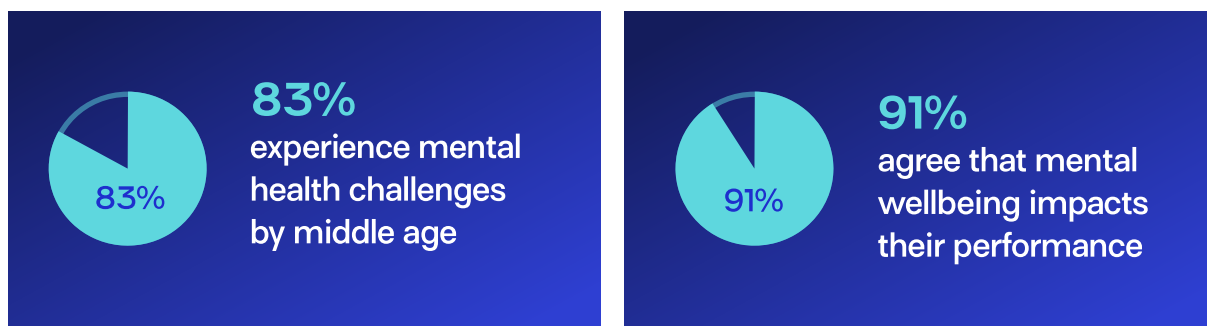


By Dr. Oliver Harrison

Mental Health Advocate, CEO and Founder, Koa Health

Addressing employee mental health has never been more pressing. Companies across the globe are grappling with the unpredictable impacts of economic shifts, regulatory changes, and geopolitical uncertainty. Amid this turmoil, one constant remains: the crucial role of the employer in safeguarding workforce mental wellbeing. However, today many organizations are trapped in a cycle of ineffective strategies that fail to address the full spectrum of mental health needs—despite substantial investment.

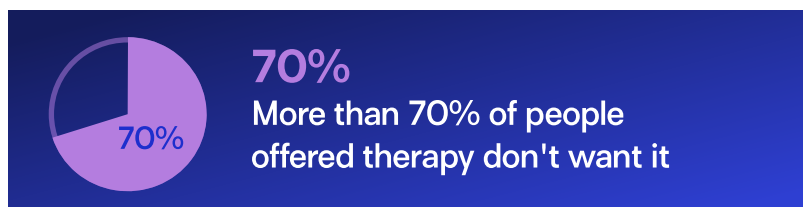
The data is stark. By middle age, 83% of people will have faced a mental health challenge.¹ 91% acknowledge that their mental wellbeing directly impacts their job performance.² 50% of employees have left positions for mental health reasons.³



Sources: APA PsycNet, CFO

While 98% of employers offer mental health services,⁴ resources are frequently underutilized: 70% of employees cite difficulty navigating benefits.⁵ This disconnect is largely due to an over-reliance on traditional mental health care pathways leading to therapy, crisis interventions, and medication. These services are essential but are not equipped to serve the diverse and nuanced needs of today's workforce.

The default approach to mental health in the workplace funnels everyone towards therapy for mental health concerns. This overdependence on traditional therapy is problematic on two fronts. First, navigating clinical care is daunting for many, particularly when individuals are at their most vulnerable; two-thirds report significant challenges in navigating care.⁶ Second, mental health challenges exist on a spectrum. Therapy—while valuable—is not a one-size-fits-all solution. More than 70% of people offered therapy don't want it.⁷



Source: McKinsey

¹ <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2016-58119-001>

² <https://www.cfo.com/news/only-19-of-employees-used-mental-health-benefits-in-2022-weekly-stat/>

³ <https://hbr.org/2021/10/its-a-new-era-for-mental-health-at-work>

⁴ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/mental-health-statistics/cost-diagnosed-mental-health-conditions-statistics>

⁵ <https://koahealth.com/blog-post/7-in-10-organizations-plan-to-increase-or-reallocate-mental-health-spend-renewing-their-commitment-to-employee-wellbeing->

⁶ <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/employee-wellbeing.html>

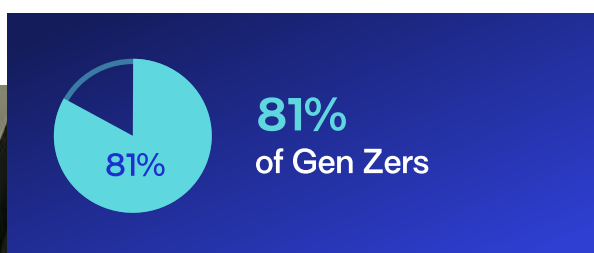
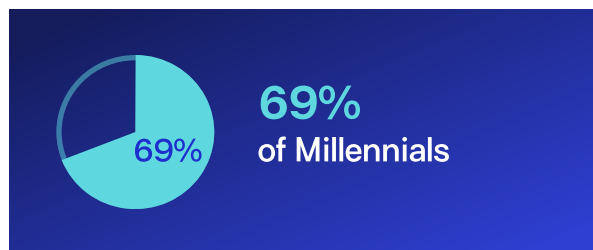
⁷ <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare/our-insights/national-surveys-reveal-disconnect-between-employees-and-employers-around-mental-health-need>

The consequences of this gap are significant. Despite employers' best intentions, many employees are unable to access the care they need. The introduction of multiple, narrow point solutions (each one intended to address a specific aspect of mental wellbeing) has compounded the problem. Such disjointed offerings often confuse rather than assist and employees are left to navigate a fragmented system at a time when they need clear, cohesive support.

The hidden costs of untreated mental health issues

The financial and operational toll of untreated mental health concerns on employers is substantial and often underestimated. Costs aren't limited to the higher health insurance claims associated with poor mental health, either. Absenteeism and presenteeism rise as employees struggle to manage their mental health, leading to diminished productivity, engagement, and work quality.⁸ Safety and security risks also escalate, particularly in environments where mental health issues can impair judgment or reaction times.⁹ Churn and turnover caused by unresolved mental health problems contribute to higher recruitment and training costs.¹⁰

TURNOVER FOR MENTAL HEALTH REASONS



Source: [Harvard Business Review](https://www.gallup.com/workplace/404174/economic-cost-poor-employee-mental-health.aspx)

⁸ <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/404174/economic-cost-poor-employee-mental-health.aspx>

⁹ <https://info.koahealth.com/mental-health-a-data-security-issue>, <https://info.koahealth.com/en-us/quick-guide-employee-mental-health-a-safety-issue>

¹⁰ <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/consultancy/deloitte-uk-mental-health-report-2024-final.pdf>

Indirect mental health costs are

4X

direct care expenses

Source: [Jama Health](#)

Why current approaches are falling short

Supporting individuals across the full continuum of mental health requires a comprehensive approach. Common problem areas I've observed include:

Over-reliance on therapy and medication: Many benefits providers blur the line between mental health distress and mental health disorders, defaulting to therapy and medication as primary interventions. This approach overlooks the broad spectrum of mental health needs. It fails to offer tailored solutions that address early-stage issues or preventive care.

9 in 10



employees want their workplace to support their mental health

7 in 10



employees say accessing mental health benefits is too challenging

Sources: [Harvard Business Review](#), [Deloitte](#)

Limited access to care: Non-desk workers and workers in rural areas often struggle to access care. Over-reliance on in-person treatment, complex care navigation systems, and a lack of personalized options further hinder access.

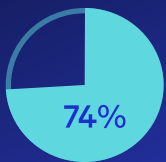
Care quality concerns: The quality of mental health solutions varies widely. Few are built on a solid evidence base, and a large percentage employ cumbersome, fragmented platforms that are difficult for employees to engage with.

Bad design leading to low uptake and engagement: Many mental health programs focus solely on addressing problems rather than building strengths. This approach fails to engage a large percentage of employees meaningfully, leading to low utilization rates and unmet needs. User centered design is a critical approach to building solutions that people want to use regularly. Too many clinically robust solutions lose this key element of good digital design.

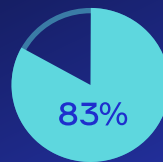
A Strategic path forward: Revolutionizing mental health support

To truly support workforce mental health, employers must adopt a comprehensive approach. This involves several key strategies:

- 1. Start care sooner.** Extend clinically validated mental health care across the continuum—from prevention and self-care to early intervention and clinical treatment. At Koa Health, our clinical-first care starts with evidence-based self-care and prevention. Help your employees maintain better mental health and prevent crises by addressing issues before they escalate and enabling access to clinically-validated tools they can use to care for themselves.



74%
of employers plan to
increase spend or
reallocate funds to
support employee
mental health in 2024



83%
credit improvements in
employee wellbeing the
prior year to increasing
spend on mental health
services

Sources: [2024 Workplace Wellbeing Trends Report](#)



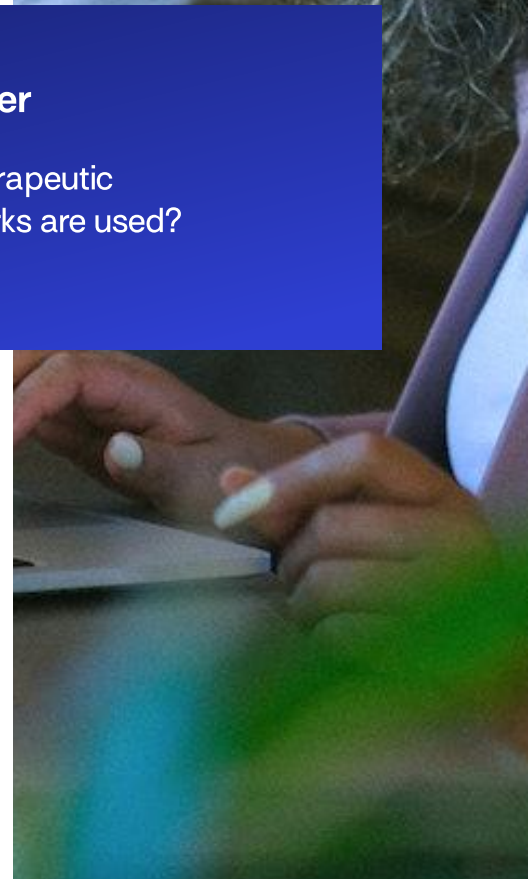
- 2. Simplify access and navigation.** A unified, easy-to-navigate digital front door can streamline care pathways and provide employees with a single entry point to a range of evidence-based services. This reduces confusion and increases engagement, ensuring employees receive timely and appropriate support.
- 3. Ensure personalized, adaptable care.** Mental health solutions must offer personalized journeys that adapt to each individual's unique needs. Comprehensive care models that integrate various therapeutic approaches can better address the full spectrum of mental health concerns. Koa Health's range of innovative therapeutic frameworks cater to the diverse needs of employees, guiding them to the right resources and services for their needs.
- 4. Vet vendors for clinical rigor, ethics, and expertise.** Employers should partner with providers who demonstrate clinical excellence and are grounded in rigorous, evidence-based practices. Vendors like Koa Health, which is clinician-founded and led, prioritize clinical integrity over technology for its own sake. We undergo regular ethics audits to ensure the care we provide is inclusive and accessible and publish them to our website.¹¹ Our solutions are developed in collaboration with experts at leading institutions such as the University of Oxford, Massachusetts General Hospital, and Harvard University, ensuring they meet the highest standards of care.



3 questions to ask a potential mental health care partner

- 1.** Is the vendor clinician-led?
- 2.** How are solutions developed, tested, and approved?
- 3.** What therapeutic frameworks are used?

- 5. Leverage intelligent data and reporting.** Effective mental health strategies require robust, real-time data to track outcomes and inform decision-making. A comprehensive digital platform should provide population-level insights (using anonymized data) that allow leadership to monitor value on investment (VOI) and adjust strategies as needed.



¹¹ <https://www.digitalhealth.net/2023/11/koa-health-external-ethics-audit-shows-24-improvement/>

Reimagining workplace mental health

The future of workplace mental health lies in changing how support is delivered—shifting from reactive, crisis-driven care to a preventative, comprehensive model that meets employees' needs across the mental health continuum. Simplifying access, ensuring quality, and personalizing care empower workforces to thrive, reducing risk and enhancing overall organizational resilience.

At Koa Health, we are leading this revolution, providing organizations worldwide with the necessary tools to make mental health support manageable, treatable, and approachable. Our work is inspired by the countless lives affected by mental health crises, and we are dedicated to unlocking human potential by getting mental health care right.



Dr. Oliver Harrison

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Oliver Harrison trained as a medical doctor at Cambridge and UCL and practiced psychiatry for six years before dedicating his career to digital mental health. He spent five years in McKinsey's Health Tech practice and the last 15 years designing and building scalable health tech solutions.

About Koa Health

A leading global mental health services provider, Koa Health is revolutionizing mental health care with clinical-first care pathways developed and validated by renowned experts. Grounded in clinical excellence and available to 4 million users worldwide, Koa Health's comprehensive care solution, Koa Care 360 delivers all-in-one mental health care—self-care and prevention through clinical treatment—to employees and population-level insights to employers and health plans from a unified platform.

Backed by leading investors such as Morningside, Ancora Finance Group, Wellington Partners Life Sciences, and MTIP, Koa Health has spent the past 8 years meticulously researching and validating our comprehensive care model, enabling industries and individuals to take ownership of mental health and transform lives for the better.

Mental health is more than just therapy. Email us at info@koahealth.com to find out how to make mental health manageable, treatable, and approachable with Koa Health.

