

THE GENDER WELLBEING GAP 2025

A GLWS Insights Paper





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Authorship

Co-authored by psychologists Carly Arkinstall and Audrey McGibbon, this report synthesises complex statistical analyses performed by Margo Kan to distil key insights, detailed findings and the overarching narrative.

FOREWORD

As workplace psychologists specialising in psychological assessment and measurement, our work with the Global Leadership Wellbeing Survey (GLWS®) has culminated in a uniquely comprehensive dataset, shaped by years of focused effort and deep engagement with leaders and professionals. Together with our strong emphasis on research, expertise in leadership and wellbeing and an unwavering commitment to gender equality, this data has led to insights we feel compelled to share.

Growing business pressures and concerns in senior roles. Many of you, like us, are uneasy about the toll on mental health and wellbeing for *all* those in senior roles. Alongside the commercial and operational imperatives arising from concerns over subdued, lagging or stagnant productivity growth in Australia, New Zealand, the European Union, the UK and other markets, new levels of disquiet/despair are increasingly evident. For the individuals who bear the responsibility of meeting their organisations' heightened demands, it is now commonplace, irrespective of gender, for those expectations to feel unrealistic and unsustainable.

Since 2016, we have witnessed an **overall 23% decrease in the proportion of senior professionals and leaders reporting high levels of work-related wellbeing** and a **16% decrease in those with high levels of personal wellbeing**. The long-term trend shows a general decline in wellbeing, regardless of gender.

The human and performance costs. When tertiary-qualified, experienced, achievement-oriented, hard-working, committed and (mostly still) engaged professionals are thinking to themselves, 'this is too much' or 'things have gone too far,' what they are often expressing is a state of chronic hypervigilance, where their sympathetic nervous systems have remained over-activated for prolonged periods. Enjoying work becomes a thing of the past when resentment or overwhelm takes hold; wellbeing and performance enter a downward spiral. The implications of such patterns are profoundly negative for individuals and their families, so too for the businesses and teams they lead.

Hidden gender dynamics. This special report investigates a central question: *Is the wellbeing of those in senior/complex roles disproportionately worse for women than for men?* The answers expose significant sources of adverse impact and reveal hidden costs and barriers that are currently underprioritised in many organisations.

Revisiting the Gender Wellbeing Gap. In the early years of GLWS, based on a sample of approximately 1000 leaders, we established evidence for a small 'Gender Wellbeing Gap'. In the post-pandemic context, driven by both curiosity and concern, we decided to re-examine the issue.



While we anticipated a worsening of gender differences in several areas, the extent of the gap that emerged since our initial baseline assessment of 2016 was deeply confronting and prompted our inaugural Gender Wellbeing Gap publication.

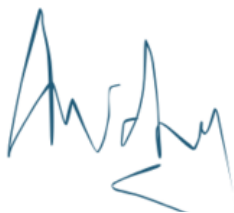
Presenting the 2025 findings. Now, in this GLWS 2025 Gender Wellbeing Gap Report, we present the findings from our most comprehensive and detailed exploration ever. Differences in the wellbeing needs, experiences and circumstances of leaders and professionals, both women and men, in their professional and personal lives reveal further evidence of worrying trends.

A call for change. *It does not have to be this way.* Alongside the dark, this report provides some light: new insights we hope will add nuance to the broader discourse about gender disparities in economic and wage inequality, the imbalance between unpaid and paid labour, limited career advancement, underrepresentation in leadership and decision-making roles, glass ceilings and glass cliffs, and systemic bias in research and service provision.

Untapped levers for positive change do exist. While our findings pose serious consequences for women's wellbeing, performance and success, they also give hope: that organisational systems such as reward, talent, succession, learning and development, workplace practices and culture, diversity, inclusion and belonging, leadership, workplace health and safety and organisational design can be enhanced to deliver better outcomes. We invite you to delve into this report, confirm or challenge your perspectives, and join us in advocating for a future where gender equality in wellbeing is not just a 'must do better' aspiration, but a reality.

Acknowledgements. Finally, I would like to express heartfelt gratitude to our whole team for their magnificent efforts and months of painstaking care dedicated to creating this report. I also want to thank all of the GLWS Survey participants and our committed GLWS Accredited Practitioners, without whom this report would simply not have been possible. Lastly, to everyone taking the time to read this report—thank you. We hope you find it thought-provoking, valuable and worthy of further discussion.

Yours in all things wellbeing, leaders and culture,



Audrey McGibbon

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INTRODUCTION

Objectives

1

Investigate and highlight the complexity of gendered wellbeing issues as a critical talent issue for individual leaders and professionals, and their employers.

2

Elevate wellbeing as a key strategic driver for those seeking gender equality at the top in their organisations.

3

Identify and provide accurate, detailed and compelling insights into gender wellbeing disparities.

4

Avoid misguided discourse about women's wellbeing challenges as matters attributed solely to personal flaws that require 'fixing'.

5

Avoid misguided discourse about women's wellbeing challenges as matters over which they have no personal agency or influence, that can be improved only with systemic interventions.

6

Steer discussions towards a balanced and constructive gender wellbeing strategy, by ensuring that individual and psychosocial health factors, both work-related (environment, people and job) and outside of work are thoroughly identified, considered and appropriately addressed.



Strategic Context

In recent years, academic and government studies have highlighted a persistent and widening gender wellbeing gap among adults.¹ Despite improvements in women's overall economic standing and a general tendency to report higher levels of life satisfaction and happiness than men, their mental and emotional health outcomes are often worse. Compared to men, adult women tend to score worse on negative affect (mood) indicators such as depression and anxiety, and lower on positive affect measures like cheerfulness and calmness. This paradox highlights that while women may report higher overall happiness, they often experience poorer mental health and lower overall wellbeing.¹

Commentary in grey literature, including platforms like LinkedIn and coverage in the Australian and UK business and financial press, has often focused on the gender gap in financial wellbeing, particularly in the context of the cost-of-living crisis: working women often face greater financial stress and insecurity compared to men, not solely due to income differences but also structural and market factors.²

Despite a broader political shift towards conservatism in parts of the USA, Europe and UK, which is posing challenges to gender equity, many organisations are intensifying their efforts to advance gender equality in the workplace.³ Why? Reducing gender inequity is a proven driver of improved business culture, performance, sustainability and wellbeing. Gender-sensitive policies are increasingly seen as essential mechanisms for achieving these outcomes.⁴

While there is growing momentum for systemic change to dismantle barriers and promote gender equality in the workplace, the unique needs and challenges encountered by women in (or aspiring to) leadership and professional/expert roles can be especially complex and remain insufficiently explored by many employers. Organisations such as Chief Executive Women (CEW), Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW), Women & Leadership Australia (WLA) and Women Leaders in the UK are particularly concerned about the feasibility of senior women balancing work and personal life, overcoming biases, breaking through glass ceilings and avoiding glass cliffs.



Rooted in (mostly) unconscious systemic biases, discriminatory practices and cultural norms, women often face a lack of resources, mentorship and flexibility in the workplace as well-documented hindrances to their career progress.

Add in heightened scrutiny combined with limited support, unrealistic expectations and increased vulnerability, and it isn't just the negative impact on career trajectories that is the problem, but also very much wellbeing. All this is to say, there is a growing need to also address **The Gender Wellbeing Gap** if we are to succeed in promoting gender equality more broadly in professional settings.⁵

The GLWS Gender Wellbeing Gap Report 2025 aims to raise the importance of wellbeing as a key plank in any strategy for achieving gender equity among leaders and professionals.

By highlighting wellbeing disparities and their implications, along with recommendations for further action, we hope to reinforce the value of the GLWS for our existing practitioner community and inspire new audiences to engage with its insights.

Our driving force is a future where gender equality includes wellbeing not as an aspiration, but as a lived reality.

1 Ravenswood et al (2017), Schmid et al (2023), Kaiser & Muggleton (2025), Hamilton et al (2022), Safe Work Australia (2024), Australia Productivity Commission (2020), Te Hīringa Mahara-Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission (2025), Mind (2024).

2 UN Women (2025, April 11), World Economic Forum (2023, January 26), The Guardian (2022, October 21), Australian Financial Review (2025, Women in Leadership), The Conversation (2025, April 27).

3 UN Women, Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), Equality Rights Alliance (ERA), Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), Champions for Change, Ministers for Women and Sex Discrimination Commissioners in Australia, UK, New Zealand, Canada, Japan and France.

4 Hebl et al (2025), Panerati et al (2025), Catalyst (2020).

5 Sheppard (2023), Meena (2021).

6 Ruggeri et al (2020).

Understanding Wellbeing

Wellbeing is complex and multifaceted.⁶

To enhance the value of this report and its findings, we have briefly summarised how we define and explain what wellbeing is and how it operates, as well as our core approach to defining what wellbeing looks like and how to measure it for leader and professional populations.

What is it?

“Wellbeing is a delicate balancing act between an individual's subjective perceptions of the factors protecting, energising or sustaining them, and those they experience as draining or depletive.”

— Audrey McGibbon

How it operates?

- 1 Wellbeing varies between individuals due to diverse psychological, emotional, social, cognitive and physical resources and demands.
- 2 Everyone possesses a baseline level of wellbeing and typically operates within a set range on either side of this baseline; this represents their 'normal'.
- 3 Wellbeing fluctuates with life events, challenges and experiences; is influenced by both internal and external factors, at work and home; and does not require the absence of stressful demands but rather a balance of positive and protective resources.
- 4 Wellbeing functions like a seesaw: when negative demands outweigh available resources, the balance dips, and wellbeing declines. Likewise an excess of ample resources but lack of meaningful/engaging demands also creates imbalance.
- 5 Professionals and leaders who are helped to identify the precise imbalances between their wellbeing resources and demands holistically, in both their professional and personal lives, are best placed to thrive.

What it looks like?

The GLWS Framework provides a conceptually and empirically validated multi-dimensional model of the factors driving and sustaining professionals' and leaders' wellbeing, at work and in their personal lives.

A simplified version of the framework is provided below to assist with the interpretation of findings presented later in this report. The GLWS Framework represents the many aspects impacting an individual, team or entire organisation's experience of wellbeing.



Note: The GLWS Framework is not a substitute for an individual assessment and must always be used in conjunction with the GLWS Survey diagnostic.



How to measure it?

The goal of the GLWS is to create an effective and efficient wellbeing assessment, reporting and development tool that leaders and professionals find relevant and valuable, enabling simple, fast and meaningful engagement. It assesses wellbeing by providing detailed evaluations and insights into each of the dimensions in the GLWS Framework, i.e., the unique combination of demands and resources driving their wellbeing, happiness, job satisfaction and overall satisfaction with life. Over the past ten years, the GLWS has undergone extensive internal and external, scientific and business reviews and is highly regarded. The analysis of gender-related wellbeing findings in this report utilises the GLWS Framework, its 132 survey questions, 5 Subjective Wellbeing (SWB) measures and extensive additional demographic information. Due to length constraints, not every aspect of the dataset has been covered in this report.

About this Research Approach

The dataset for this study is drawn from GLWS Survey Respondents collected during 2016 - 2024. Participants completed the wellbeing assessment voluntarily as part of a range of professional development and organisational initiatives, including executive and wellbeing coaching, leadership programs, team development, diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) programs, organisational and culture change projects, and resilience or stress management interventions. All respondents provided informed consent for their data to be de-identified and aggregated for research purposes.

While this report focuses primarily on current cross-sectional descriptive data, multi-year trends have also been included where sample sizes are substantial and findings are statistically significant. Differences between groups (e.g. men vs. women, or 2023 vs. 2024 datasets) are reported only when supported by statistical analysis. Specifically, independent sample t-tests were conducted to assess differences between group means. Unless otherwise stated, reported differences are statistically significant at $p < .001$, indicating less than a 0.1% probability that the observed differences are due to chance.



Sample size and description

Participants	n = 8,681
Gender	Women: 51.99% Men: 33.79% Other/Prefer not to say: 13.94%
Age	Under 25: 1.53% 26-45: 44.63% 46-65: 37.51% Over 66: 0.82% Prefer not to say: 15.47%
Seniority	Senior Leaders: 19.97% Mid-Level Leaders: 15.89% Managers: 31.19% Professionals/Experts: 16.53% Other/Prefer not to say: 16.42%
Location	Australia: 58.81% NZ: 3.18% UK: 3.35% Other: 8.51% Prefer not to say: 26.15%
Sector	Private: 55.88% Public: 23.70% Not for Profit: 5.55% Prefer not to say: 14.87%

OVERVIEW: SIX KEY INSIGHTS

Condensing a dataset of over 1.6 million data cells into a concise overview is challenging! However, we have distilled six key insights that capture and communicate messages we hope will command the attention of leaders, policy, and decision-makers. Each key finding is elaborated in detail within later sections of this report.

1 **MULTIPLE MEASURES, BUT ONLY ONE MESSAGE:** Women's Wellbeing Is Falling

Year on year since 2016, women occupying leadership and professional roles have reported deteriorating wellbeing on four key subjective measures:

- Overall Work Wellbeing
- Overall Personal Wellbeing
- Overall Life Satisfaction
- Overall Happiness.

2 **UNSEEN & UNADDRESSED:** The Gender Wellbeing Divide

Over the past decade, **professional women's overall wellbeing, happiness, and satisfaction have declined by up to 28%**. Although gender representation and pay disparities in leadership are showing signs of improvement, it raises a critical question:

- *Is gender equality 'progress' at the top being achieved at the expense of women's wellbeing?*

Women leaders consistently report poorer wellbeing than their male counterparts. Yet, despite these widening gender disparities, these issues often remain taboo and are rarely acknowledged, measured or actively addressed within organisations.

3 **THE "JUGGLE STRUGGLE":** Still A Deeply Gendered Challenge

Women are clearly signalling that their current patterns of working and living are neither healthy nor sustainable. The growing strain they are under is illustrated by:

- 70% of women report juggling work and personal commitments is taking a toll
- 79% of women are yearning for a slower pace of life
- 64% of women report they are drowning in household chores and personal or family administration.

4 **BEARING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BURDEN:** An Unequal Toll On Professional Women

Women in senior roles carry a notably higher psychological burden than men in comparable roles:

- Women experience stress, emotional turmoil, depression and self-doubt at levels over 30% higher than their male colleagues.

5 **PHYSICALLY DRAINED & MORE DEPLETED:** Despite Women's Healthier Lifestyle Habits

Women maintain healthier lifestyle habits than men, yet disproportionately struggle to maintain their energy:

- 70% of women feel exhausted at work
- 74% of women skip essential breaks

This is not as simple as blaming individual shortcomings or deficits in resilience, but rather reflects deeply embedded systemic norms that are shaped by a combination of societal, familial and organisational attitudes, beliefs and values. These multi-factorial pressures interact in complex, often unpredictable ways with personal factors and individual circumstances to determine the challenges women face.

6 **UNEQUAL PATHS:** Lower Career Confidence, Agency & Optimism

Women are 34% more likely to feel uncertain about their career direction compared to men, and often lack the confidence and/or trust in their boss (relative to men) needed to shape their professional paths.



THE GENDER WELLBEING GAP 2025

Detailed Analysis

We believe the six key insights identified in our latest research warrant deeper consideration. In doing so, we hope to inspire organisational decision-makers to support a focused examination of the wellbeing of all their leaders and senior personnel. By addressing these often-overlooked dimensions, organisations can unlock valuable improvements across other critical drivers of individual and organisational success.





MULTIPLE MEASURES BUT ONLY ONE MESSAGE: Women's Wellbeing is Falling

As we begin this detailed analysis of the troubling state of professional women's wellbeing, it is important to stress that the broader leadership wellbeing landscape is also far from idyllic.

This is not a case of men thriving while women struggle: the long-term trajectory is concerning for everyone, irrespective of gender. **Since 2016, overall work-related wellbeing among leaders, managers and senior professionals has declined by an average of 23%**, with a 16.2% drop in those reporting high levels of wellbeing outside of work. Such declines reflect a wider narrative of escalating demands, pressures and expectations of those in leadership and professional roles, particularly in a world that is increasingly disrupted, volatile and undergoing constant transformation.

However, it is also clear that **the trends among women are more acute, raising serious health concerns and posing significant risks to leadership sustainability, workplace culture, and organisational performance**. Women are experiencing disproportionately poorer wellbeing outcomes.

Just 1 in 13 women now report thriving at work

Decreased prevalence of high workplace wellbeing

7.5%

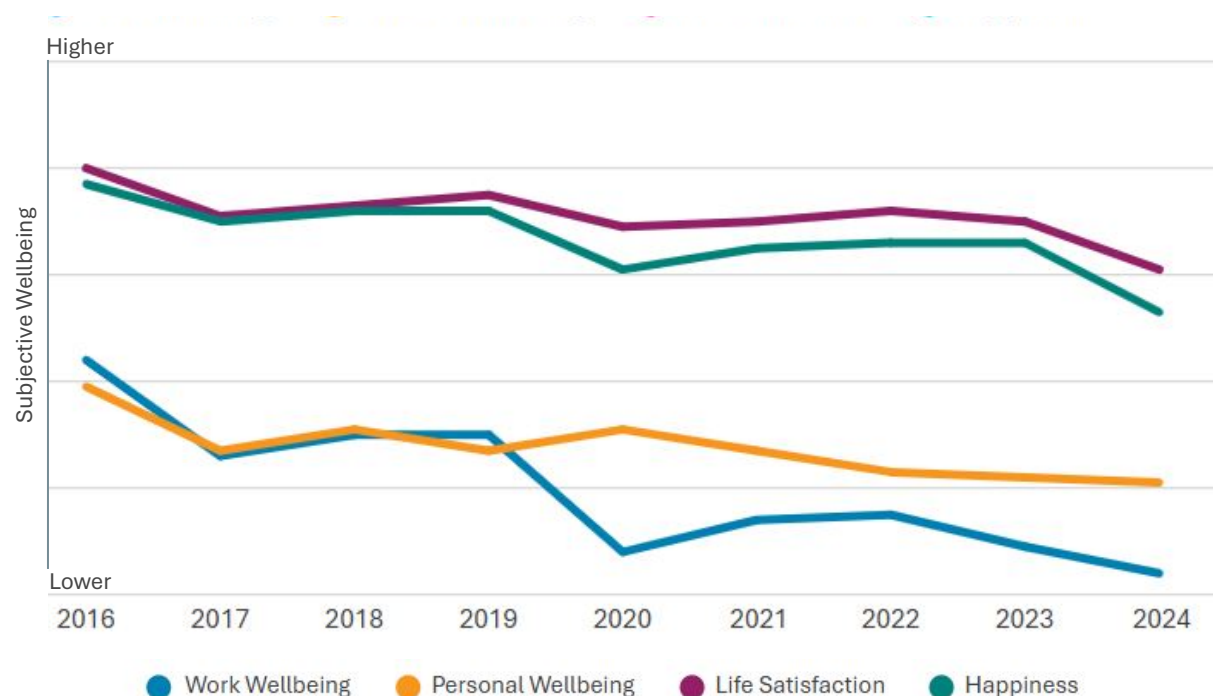
The proportion of professional women reporting very high levels of work-related wellbeing has dropped by 54.8% during the period from 2016 to 2024, falling to a new low of 7.5% in 2024.



A concerning descent: women's diminishing wellbeing

Since the baseline measurement of subjective wellbeing (SWB) for women leaders and professionals was established in 2016, there has been a consistent year-on-year statistically significant decline across all four SWB indicators: work wellbeing, personal wellbeing, life satisfaction and happiness. As Figure 1 below illustrates, this downward trend persisted into 2024 with further deterioration observed across each measure, and the steepest slide being work-related not personal wellbeing.

Figure 1. Long-term patterns of women's diminishing wellbeing



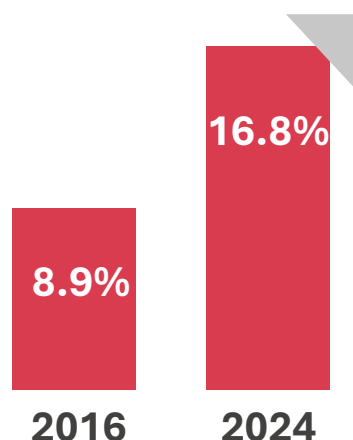
A troubling climb: more women struggling at work

The proportion of professional women reporting low or fairly low levels of wellbeing at work has increased by 88.5%, reaching 16.8% of all women.

In 2024, more than twice as many women struggled as thrived.



88.5%

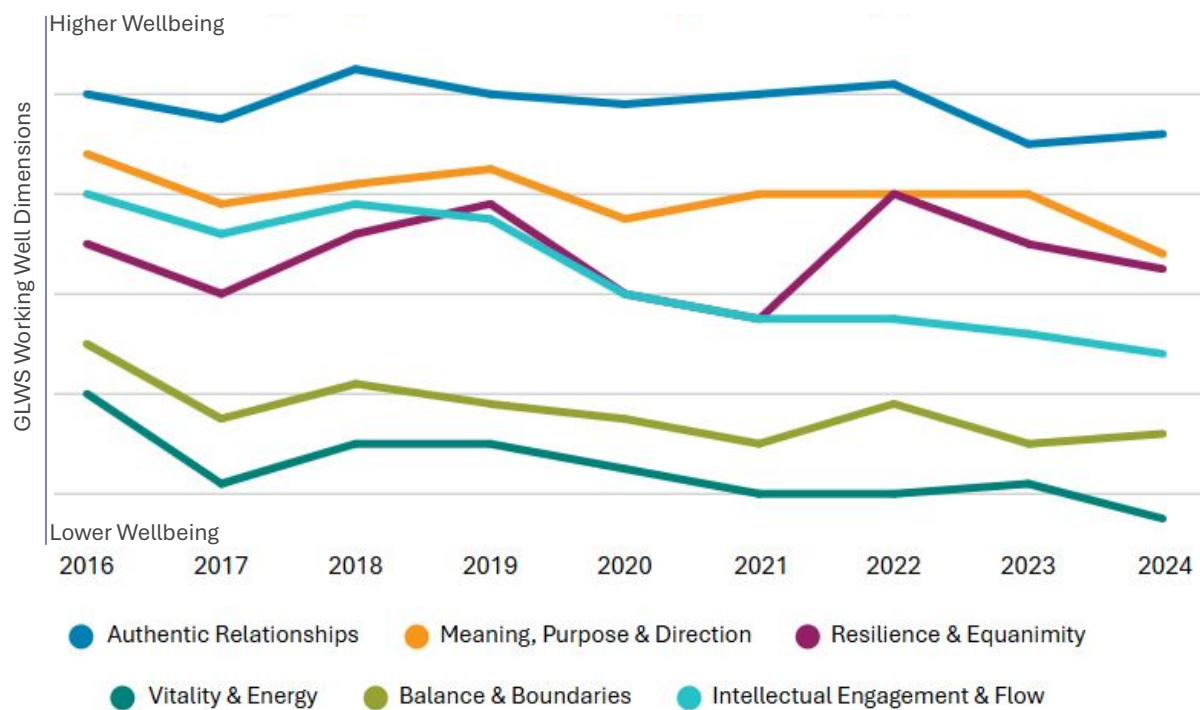


The six dimensions of a downward spiral in women's **work-related wellbeing**



A deeper analysis of women's work-related wellbeing, based on the detailed dimension-specific responses to the GLWS provides more nuanced insights into the signs, symptoms and potential root causes behind the persistent downward trends. Figure 2 plots the year-on-year average scores for each of the six GLWS Working Well dimensions by averaging respondents' ratings of 11 survey items for each dimension.

Figure 2. Multi-dimensional, multi-year decline of **work-related wellbeing** among women in leadership and professional roles.



Vitality & Energy is the lowest scoring wellbeing dimension and area of most pronounced decline.

Results indicate rising levels of physical depletion and reduced productivity, potentially signaling unsustainable work demands and practices.

Women's wellbeing has declined across every GLWS Working Well dimension since 2016.

In 2024, modest gains were noted for **Authentic Relationships** and **Balance & Boundaries** compared to 2023.

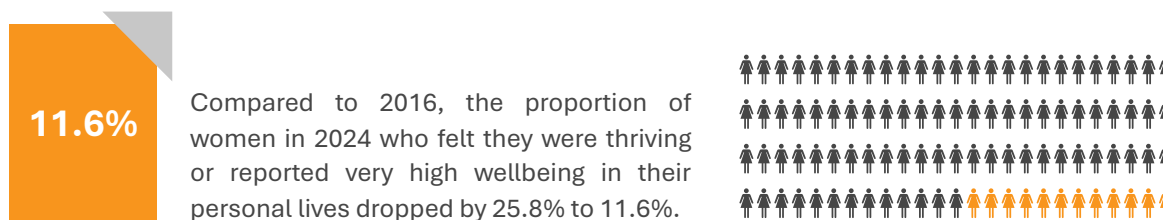
While encouraging, the increases are too modest to offset the broader declines in work-related wellbeing.

Beyond the office: Just 1 in 9 women are thriving

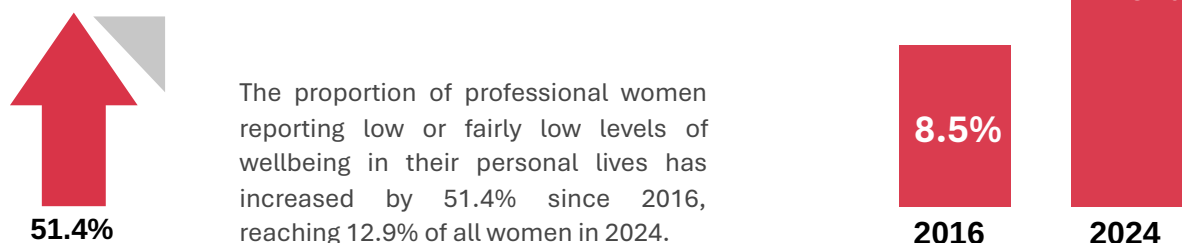


The downward trend noted for work-related wellbeing extends into wellbeing outside of work.

Decreased prevalence of high personal wellbeing



Increased prevalence of low personal wellbeing



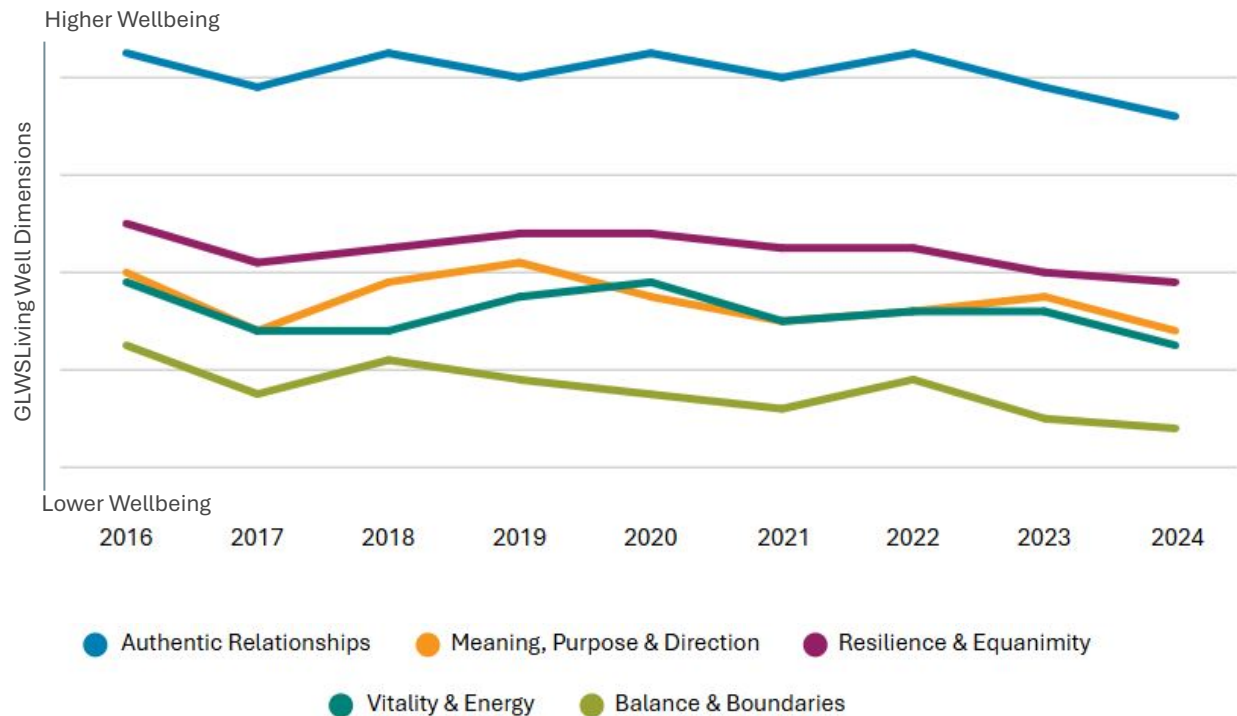
The **personal** toll: tracking the six dimensions of women's wellbeing **beyond the workplace**

Once again, a more detailed analysis reveals long-term decline across all six dimensions of personal wellbeing outside of work, as measured in the GLWS Living Well section (see Figure 3).

While these declines are not as steep as those reported for the GLWS Working Well dimensions (in either absolute terms or relative deterioration over time), **Balance & Boundaries** stands out as the **most concerning overall dimension of women's personal wellbeing**.

Managing the cumulative demands placed on professional women, particularly those arising outside the workplace, has become increasingly difficult. **Achieving a sustainable balance between work and family responsibilities is notably more challenging today than it was less than a decade earlier.**

Figure 3. Multi-dimensional, multi-year decline of **personal wellbeing** among women in leadership and professional roles.



Adding to this picture is **declining Vitality & Energy outside of work**, reinforcing observations that women often sacrifice self-care and personal time in response to competing demands of work, family and life administration. The brief uplift in self-care noted during the early years of COVID-19, driven by increased outdoor activity and better sleep routines, has since regressed. The reemergence of self-sacrificing behaviours now appears more entrenched, suggesting unsustainable and maladaptive coping strategies.

Escalating physical, mental and emotional demands, and work-home conflicts are contributing to heightened strain and tension for women, not just at work but also within the home domain. This is manifesting in increased psychological discomfort, as reflected in **declining levels of Resilience & Equanimity outside of work**.

While confronting, it's not all bad news. Since 2016, women have consistently ranked their social and relational lives outside of work (**Authentic Relationships**) as their highest-scoring wellbeing resource. This suggests that, despite increasing work and life pressures, women remain committed to nurturing key personal relationships and still feel positive about this aspect of their wellbeing as a mostly supportive and protective factor. However, it's important not to overstate this strength: Authentic Relationships, while remaining the highest-scoring overall dimension, has nevertheless also shown long-term decline.



UNSEEN & UNADDRESSED: The Gender Wellbeing Divide

Over the past decade, **professional women's overall levels of wellbeing, happiness and satisfaction have declined by up to 28%**. Gender representation and pay inequalities at the top are narrowing, but is so-called 'progress' coming at the expense of women's wellbeing?

Women leaders consistently report worse wellbeing compared to their male counterparts, and despite worsening gender disparities, these are often taboo and remain largely unacknowledged, measured or managed by organisations.

Mind the **Subjective Wellbeing (SWB)** gender gap!

For 3 out of the 4 SWB measures reported in Figure 1, findings are significantly worse for women in leadership and professional roles than for men. Referring to these same SWB measures during the period 2016-2024, compared to men:

- **Women have lower overall work-related wellbeing.**
- **Women have lower overall personal wellbeing.**
- **Women have lower life satisfaction compared to men.**

For the fourth measure of SWB – happiness – women do not report their happiness levels in a materially different way from those experienced by men, despite their lower wellbeing and satisfaction levels. Happiness is the only SWB measure not to show a gender difference.

These GLWS informed findings are largely consistent with a broader research phenomenon referred to as the *Female Happiness Paradox* which finds that women often report comparable (or even higher) levels of happiness than men *despite experiencing generally worse mental health outcomes, such as higher levels of anxiety and depression and anxiety.*



As we shall see from other insights in this report, this phenomenon suggests that while women may face significant challenges in their work and personal lives, their ability to maintain strong social connections, engage in positive reframing, and maintain resilience helps them to sustain comparable levels of happiness to men.

Unlike findings from studies based on general population samples, the women in our sample who occupy leadership and senior professional roles report lower levels of life satisfaction on average than their male counterparts.

Mind the **Working Well** gender wellbeing gap!

One of the most significant gender gaps we identified relates to leaders' and professionals' overall levels of work-related wellbeing.



24.6%



**MORE LIKELY TO REPORT
LOWER LEVELS OF WORK WELLBEING**

In 2024, women were 24.6% more likely than men to report lower levels of work-related wellbeing. This gap existed before and has persisted beyond the pandemic years, and may be considered highly statistically significant due to large sample sizes. **Women reported fewer positive and more negative wellbeing experiences than men on five out of the six GLWS dimensions for Working Well:**

- **Resilience & Equanimity:** Women reported more stress, anxiety, emotional dysregulation, and self-doubt. They also showed greater emotional consideration for others.
- **Meaning, Purpose & Direction:** Women were less likely to feel their work was meaningful, wellsuited to them, or aligned with a clear career path.
- **Authentic Relationships:** Women felt less respected, less able to trust their boss, and more likely to experience toxic relationships.
- **Balance & Boundaries:** Women were more likely to feel time-pressured, pulled in multiple directions, and dissatisfied with the amount of time spent on work.
- **Intellectual Engagement & Flow:** While overall scores were similar, item-level analysis revealed differences in role content and career interests.

The dimension that showed no significant *overall* gender difference was **Vitality & Energy**. Curiously, it is also the lowest-scoring overall wellbeing dimension for both women and men. Furthermore, an analysis of the individual items (questions) for this dimension shows that distinct gender differences **do** exist: revealing women as more energetically depleted despite having generally healthier lifestyle habits than men. This theme is explored further in Pages 35-38.

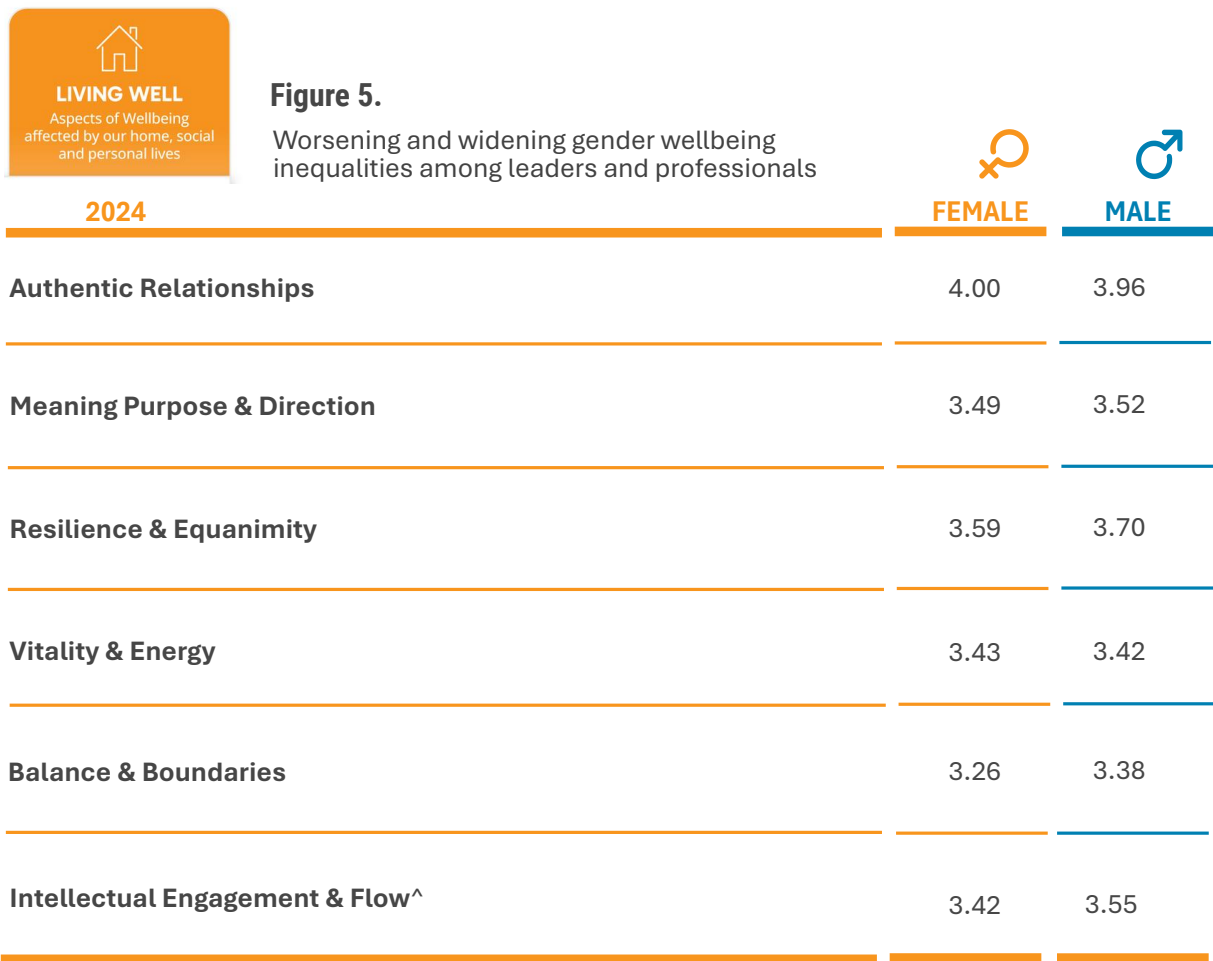


Figure 4.
Worsening and widening gender wellbeing inequalities among leaders and professionals

2024	FEMALE	MALE
Authentic Relationships Women in professional and leadership roles feel less respected, less likely to be taken seriously, less certain about being able to trust their boss, more unsure about where they stand with regard to their work performance, and more likely to experience toxic relationships than their male counterparts. Several of these aspects are discussed further in Key Finding #6 Lower Career Confidence & Optimism.	3.92	4.00
Meaning, Purpose & Direction Women in professional and leadership roles are less likely to feel their roles or work are making a valuable contribution or difference, less likely to derive significant meaning or purpose from their roles, less likely to feel well-suited to their roles, less likely to feel able to shape their career path or have a clear direction and vision for their future than their male counterparts. These aspects are discussed further in Key Finding #6 Lower Career Confidence & Optimism.	3.72	3.84
Resilience & Equanimity Women in professional and leadership roles experience more self-doubt and feel more stressed, anxious, emotionally dysregulated, upset or depressed about work than their male counterparts, but also more intentional and considerate of others' emotional needs and feelings. These aspects are discussed further in Key Finding #4 'Bearing the psychological burden: an unequal toll on professional women.'	3.50	3.74
Vitality & Energy At the overall dimension level, no significant difference was reported between men and women on Vitality & Energy. However, at the item level, many differences - some positive and some negative - were identified. These are discussed in Key Finding #5 'Physically drained and more depleted – yet women have healthier lifestyle habits.'	3.13	3.13
Balance & Boundaries Women in leadership or senior professional roles are significantly less likely than their male counterparts to feel they have good balance or clear boundaries at or related to their work. They are more likely to feel their days are time pressured, that what others ask or expect of them at work is unreasonable or results in feeling pulled in too many directions, placing them at increased risk of burnout and more dissatisfied with the amount of time they are spending on work. These are discussed in Key Finding #3 'The Struggle Juggle.'	3.33	3.44
Intellectual Engagement & Flow Overall, the average score for this dimension showed only a marginal difference in favour of men's wellbeing being slightly more positive. However, at the item level, some significant differences were identified and provide useful insights into the differences in the nature and content of the roles performed by women, as well as their career interests and ambitions. These aspects are explored more fully in Key Finding #6 'Career path confidence, agency and optimism are lower among women than men.'	3.67	3.69

Mind the Living Well gender wellbeing gap!

In 2024, as in previous years, the only GLWS dimension where women outscore men to report better wellbeing and a greater quantity of positive, protective and restorative resources with fewer negative demands, risks or stressors is for **Authentic Relationships Living Well**. It seems that no matter how challenging work demands are, most women continue to invest in, nurture and feel buoyed by their key personal relationships.



Across both the **Working Well** and **Living Well** sections of the **GLWS Framework**, **six out of eleven dimensions show significant gender differences**. In five of these six dimensions, women report lower wellbeing compared to men.

Specifically, women score lower on:

- **Meaning, Purpose & Direction** in the Working Well domain
- **Resilience & Equanimity** across both domains
- **Balance & Boundaries** across both domains

The only dimension where women significantly outscore men is **Authentic Relationships**. Here, women report better wellbeing and a greater presence of positive, protective, and restorative resources, alongside fewer negative demands, risks, or stressors. This suggests that, despite challenging work demands, women continue to invest in and nurture key personal relationships.

^ Intellectual Engagement & Flow dimension in Living Well was introduced mid-2024 and is not reported in Figure 3 historical data.

3



THE JUGGLE STRUGGLE: Still A Deeply Gendered Challenge

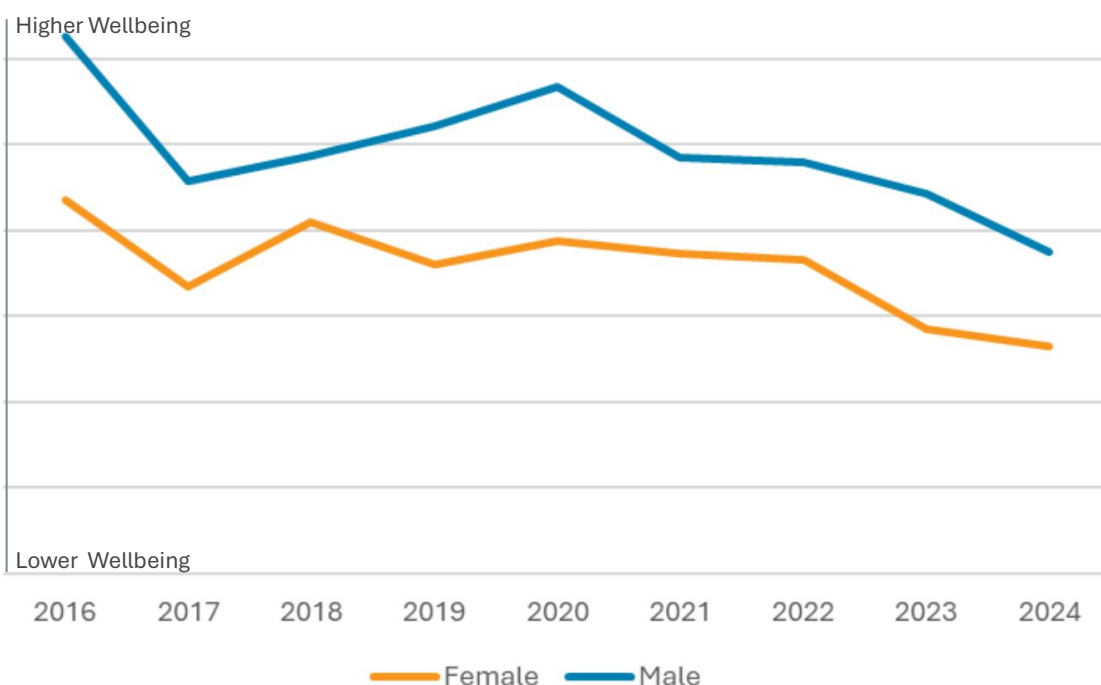
Gender wellbeing disparities in GLWS **Balance & Boundaries**

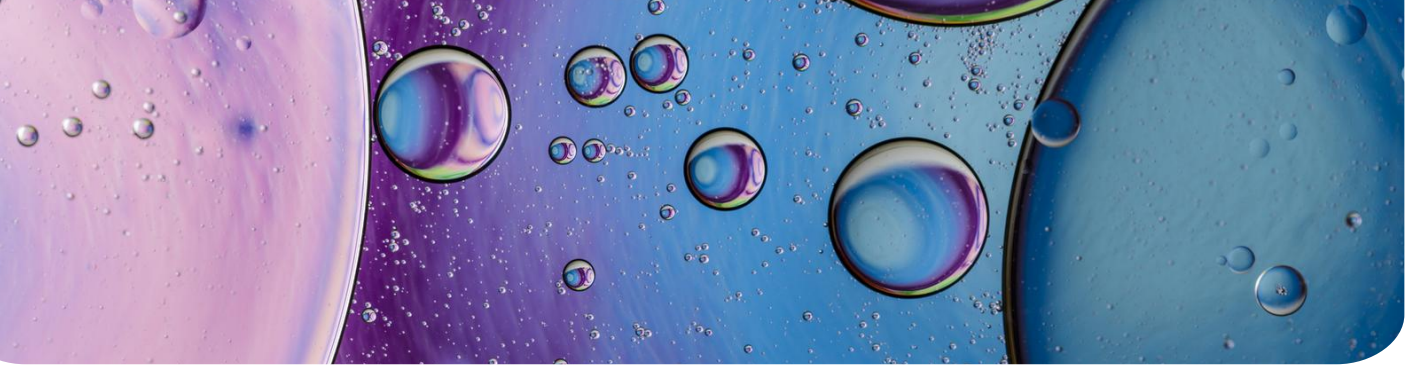
Wellbeing, as measured since 2016 by the dimension of Balance & Boundaries (Working Well), has tended to follow a downward trajectory for both men and women, and has been worse for women than men. The largest disparities were recorded in the first year of the pandemic. The pattern of overall decline has continued unabated since.



Figure 6.

Gender wellbeing inequalities in **work-related wellbeing:**
GLWS Balance & Boundaries



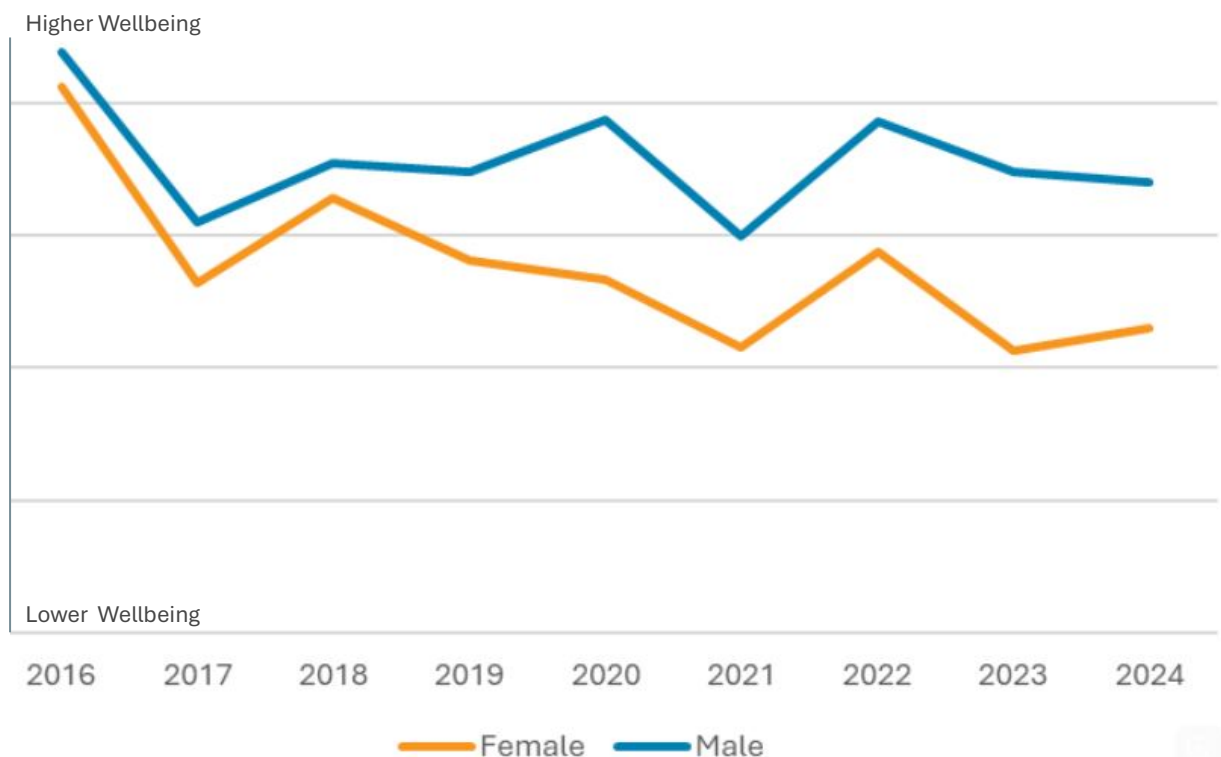


In their personal lives, women also report significantly lower Balance & Boundaries results and also with a clear decline over time. Despite efforts to challenge societal norms and expectations of change around out-of-work demands and responsibilities, there has been neither a significant reduction in the gender gap on work-life balance nor levels of role strain over time.



Figure 7.

Gender wellbeing inequalities in **personal life wellbeing: GLWS Balance & Boundaries**



A marked **decline in women's belief that it is possible to balance work and life demands without a detrimental impact to wellbeing** has been recorded over the past several years. While both genders have felt such strain, the concern is particularly prominent among women. The data shows women's perceptions of their work-life balance and work-life conflicts are significantly worse than for men on 14 out of the 22 (64%) GLWS survey items assessing their Balance & Boundaries. This statistic supports arguments that the challenges women face in juggling all of their responsibilities are more severe and that there is a clear desire (need) for a slower, more manageable pace of life.

Specific **Balance & Boundaries** gender inequalities: 2016–2024

Looking at the whole dataset (n=8,681), the worst aspects of women's Balance & Boundaries in comparison to men's, where the gender inequities are largest, are summarised below:

 WORKING WELL	LIVING WELL 
Women more frequently report: • their workload places them at risk of burnout • dissatisfaction with the amount of time spent working • disruptions and distractions from family and personal matters while they are working • their days are like a race against the clock	Women more frequently report: • their responsibilities across work and life are hard to balance • juggling work and life commitments takes a toll on their wellbeing • feeling stuck on fast forward and yearning for a slower pace of life • drowning in household chores or administrative tasks • insufficient flexibility in their home life to accommodate unplanned work demands • feeling torn between work and family
Women less frequently report: • feeling what others want or expect from them at work is reasonable	Women less frequently report: • having good discipline in switching off • feeling they have enough time to themselves after attending to the demands placed upon them • feeling what others want from them at home is fair / reasonable

Women are worse off on

64%

of Balance & Boundaries
GLWS Survey items

Specific **Balance & Boundaries** gender inequalities: 2024

Looking only at the most recent 2024 dataset, Figure 8 provides a detailed breakdown of the most significant gender wellbeing gaps identified by GLWS Balance & Boundaries across both the Working Well and Living Well sections.

Figure 8. Specific Balance & Boundaries Gender Wellbeing Inequalities in 2024

	 FEMALE ^	 MALE ^
Workdays are a race against the clock	84%	75%
Feeling stuck on fast-forward, craving a slower pace	79%	67%
Not having enough time left for themselves after attending to demands	71%	65%
Juggling work & personal commitments taking a toll on wellbeing	70%	62%
Workload placing them at risk of burnout^^	70%	60%
Drowning in household chores or personal admin	64%	46%
Not switching off from work	60%	55%
Feeling unhappy with the amount of time spent working	50%	40%

^The % of GLWS Survey respondents who responded they 'always', 'usually', or 'sometimes' feel this way.

^^ See next page for further analysis of burnout.



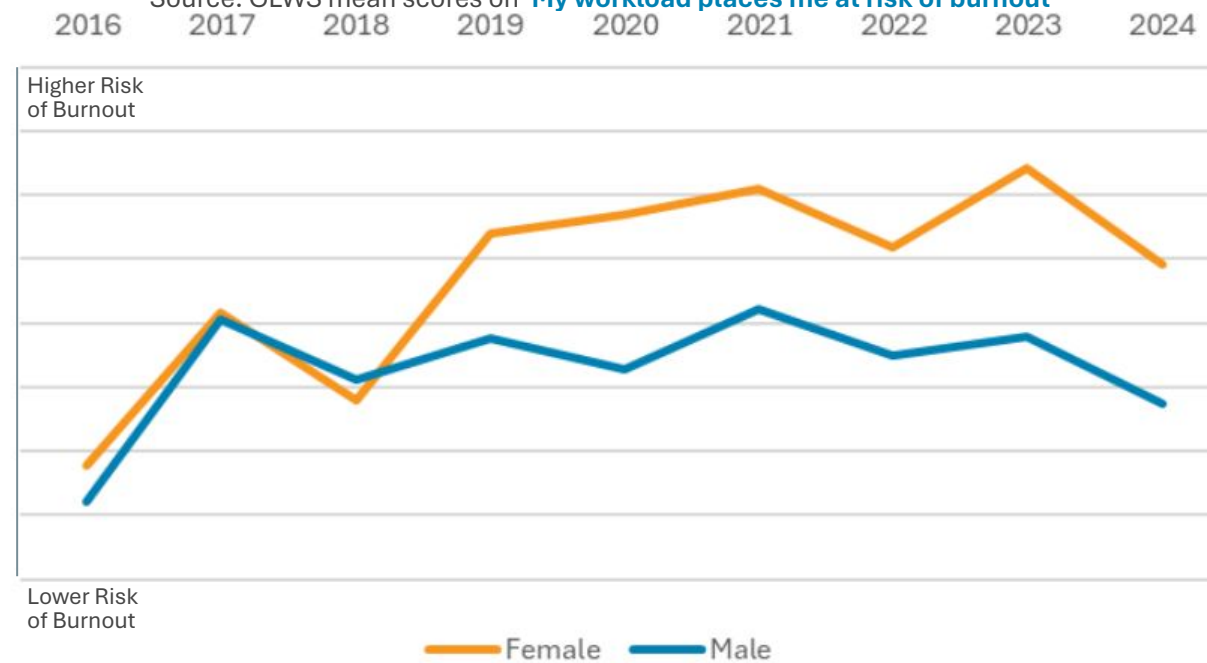
GLWS, Gender & Burnout

Burnout has been the focus of widespread growing concern in recent years. The latest GLWS research (EEK & SENSE, 2025) confirms this troubling trend by showing a steady increase in burnout rates since 2016, when levels between men and women were roughly comparable. Figure 9 reveals a persistent widening gender gap over the last five years, with women bearing a disproportionate burnout risk. While it's good news that overall burnout levels decreased slightly in 2024, **women were still 16.7% more likely to feel their workload puts them at risk of burnout compared to men**; a finding that is consistent with the State of Workplace Burnout in 2025 (Chan & Clarke, 2025)

Figure 9.

Emerging and persistent gender differences in burnout, 2016—2024.

Source: GLWS mean scores on 'My workload places me at risk of burnout'



Pressures related to perceived or expected social roles may significantly contribute to increased work-life conflict and burnout rates among women (Artz, Kaya & Kaya, 2022). GLWS 2024 findings indicate that **women are 39% more likely than men to feel they are "drowning" in personal or family administration and household chores**. They are also more likely to perceive the demands placed on them at work and at home as unrealistic.

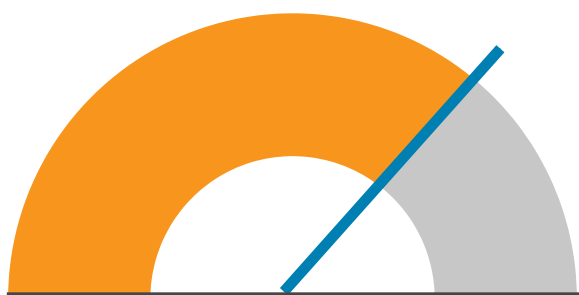
Burnout is typically considered a workplace phenomenon. However, the GLWS provides robust evidence that several personal demands outside of work are also strongly associated with the symptoms and risks of burnout, and should not therefore be ignored. A chronic imbalance between the demands of work and life, and the capacity to fulfil these expectations is ultimately contributing to, if not causing, women feeling stressed, exhausted and unfulfilled.



BEARING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BURDEN: An Unequal Toll On Professional Women

Major gender wellbeing disparities detected by GLWS **Resilience & Equanimity**

Further evidence of a widening gender wellbeing gap is pronounced for leaders and professionals' GLWS Resilience & Equanimity results, across both their professional and personal lives. This dimension continues to reveal that **women experience higher levels of stress, worry, flatness and strain** compared to their male counterparts, whose results improved for both their work and home lives in 2024.



Women are worse off on
72%
of Resilience & Equanimity
GLWS survey items

Figure 10. Gender wellbeing inequalities in **work-related wellbeing:**
GLWS Resilience & Equanimity

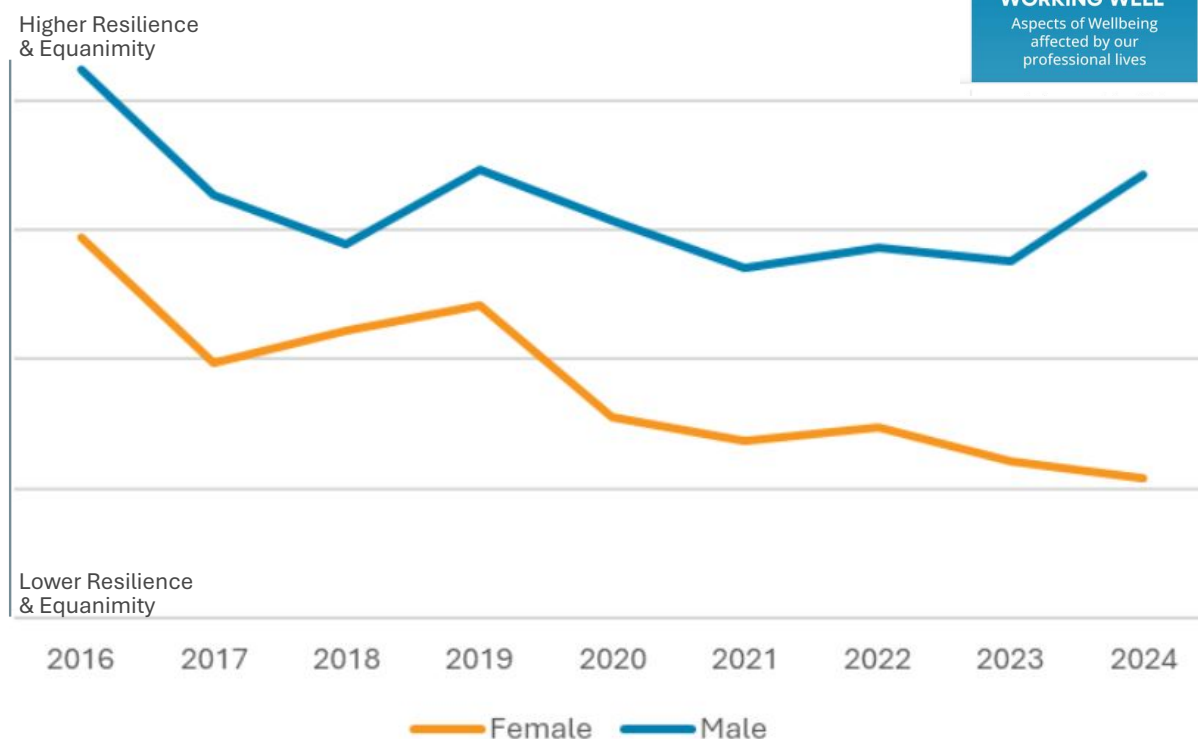
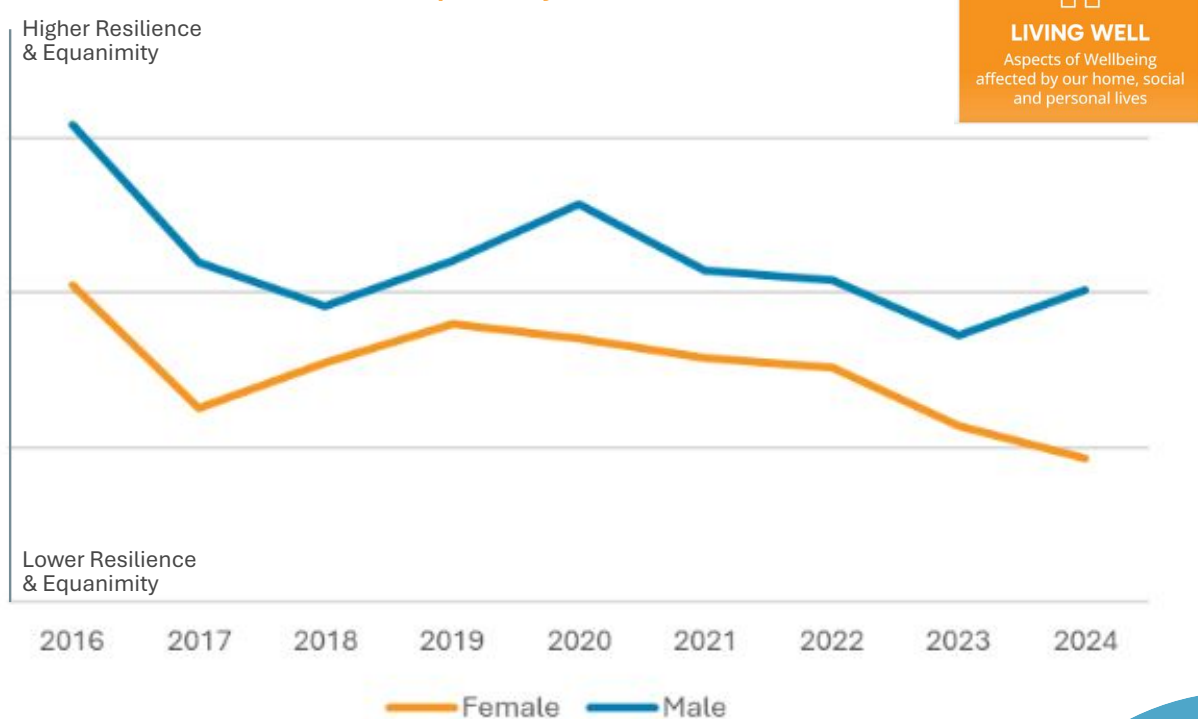


Figure 11. Gender wellbeing inequalities in **personal wellbeing:**
GLWS Resilience & Equanimity





Specific **Resilience & Equanimity** gender wellbeing inequalities: 2016–2024

Since 2016, there has been a marked decline in women’s overall levels of Resilience & Equanimity. Significant negative differences were found across 72% of all the Resilience & Equanimity survey items, highlighting the greater prevalence of higher psychological tolls among women.

Detailed results reflect that women report feeling more stressed, anxious, depressed and emotionally dysregulated both at work and in their personal lives. This gap between genders has only widened over the last 12 months.

 WORKING WELL	LIVING WELL 
Women more frequently report: • taking longer to recover from negative or stressful events and the difficult emotions that result from them. • feeling depressed about work. • feeling their emotions ‘get the better of them’ • doubting themselves at work • feeling bad about things they’ve said or done in the work context • feeling stressed or anxious about work • feeling negatively impacted by how they’ve been treated at work in the past • feeling uncertain about my role and responsibilities • feeling less likely to cultivate a sense of inner calm at work	Women more frequently report: • feeling less likely to balance their own needs with the emotional needs of others. • feeling depressed about their personal life. • feeling uptight or ‘on edge’. • feeling guilty or sad about not devoting more attention to their responsibilities outside of work. • feeling worried or anxious even when I am not working. • spending too much time dwelling on the negatives in their life • worry about their finances

Specific Resilience & Equanimity gender wellbeing inequalities: 2024

Looking only at the 2024 data, a detailed breakdown of the most significant gender gaps identified by GLWS Resilience & Equanimity is provided in Figure 12.

Figure 12. Specific Resilience & Equanimity Gender Wellbeing Inequalities: 2024

	 FEMALE ^	 MALE ^
Stressed and anxious about work	76%	64%
Doubt themselves more than they should at work	72%	53%
Guilty or sad about responsibilities outside of work	66%	61%
Uptight or 'on edge' in personal lives	64%	49%
Don't recover quickly from negative or stressful events	44%	32%
Unable to cultivate a sense of inner calm at work	42%	33%
Depressed about their work	38%	29%
Emotions getting the better of them while working	36%	23%
Depressed about their personal life	26%	22%

^The % of GLWS Survey respondents who responded they 'always', 'usually', or sometimes' feel this way.

Stressed, depressed, anxious and self-doubting gendered wellbeing discrepancies.

Other key findings from the analysis of the GLWS Resilience & Equanimity 2024 wellbeing data are reported in Figures 13 and 14 below, indicating:

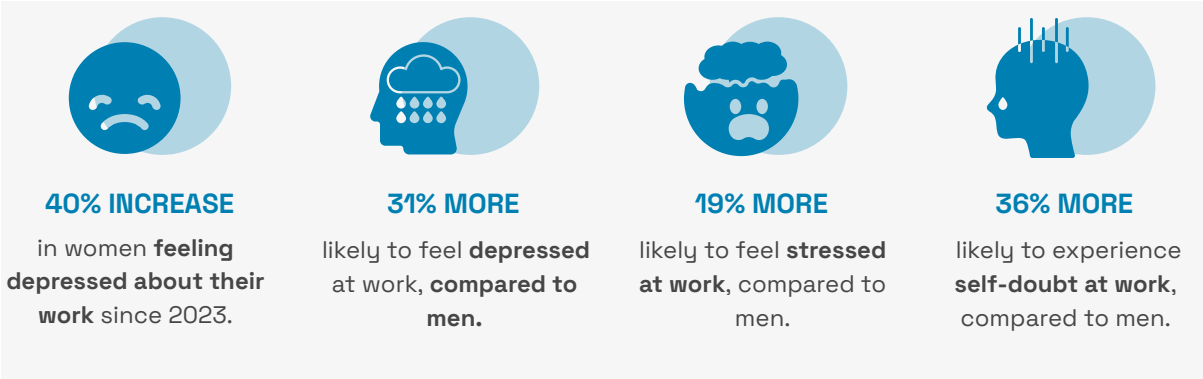
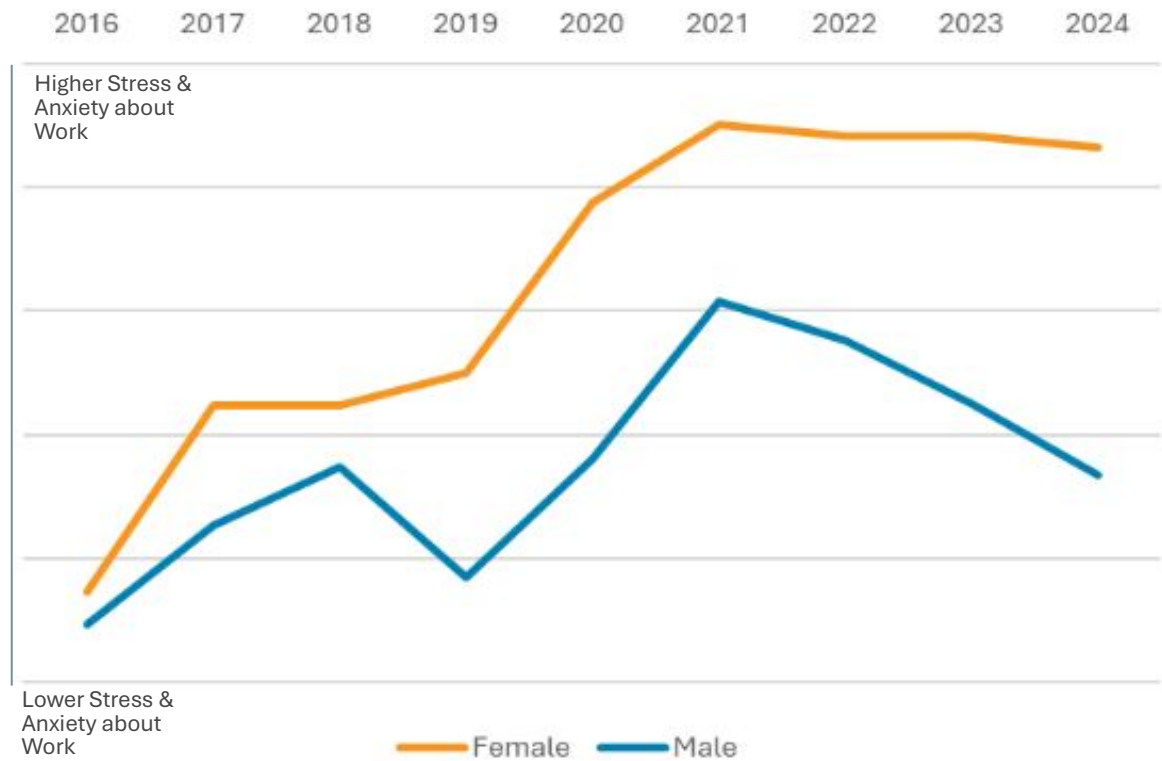


Figure 13. Emerging and persistent gender differences in worked related stress and anxiety. GLWS Survey Item mean score for '**I feel stressed or anxious about work.**'



A clear increase in stress levels at work is apparent for women, rising steadily since 2016, with sustained elevation since the pandemic. Feelings of inadequacy and impostor syndrome among professionals are well-documented, especially among high achieving professionals and women. GLWS data reveals **72% of senior women feel they doubt themselves more than is warranted**, a figure that is ~36% more likely than men. The positive news (or at least less bad) is that levels of selfdoubt have only deteriorated slightly relative to other aspects of wellbeing.

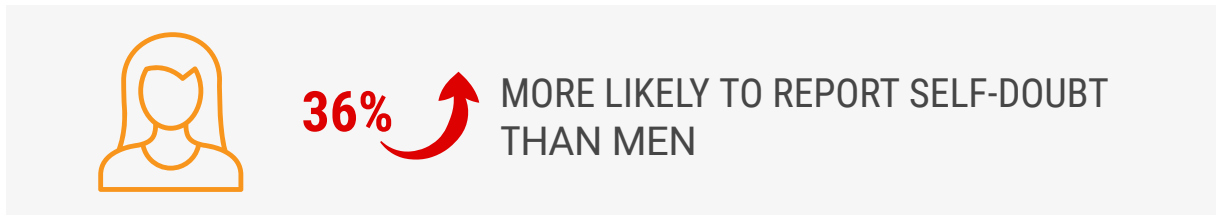
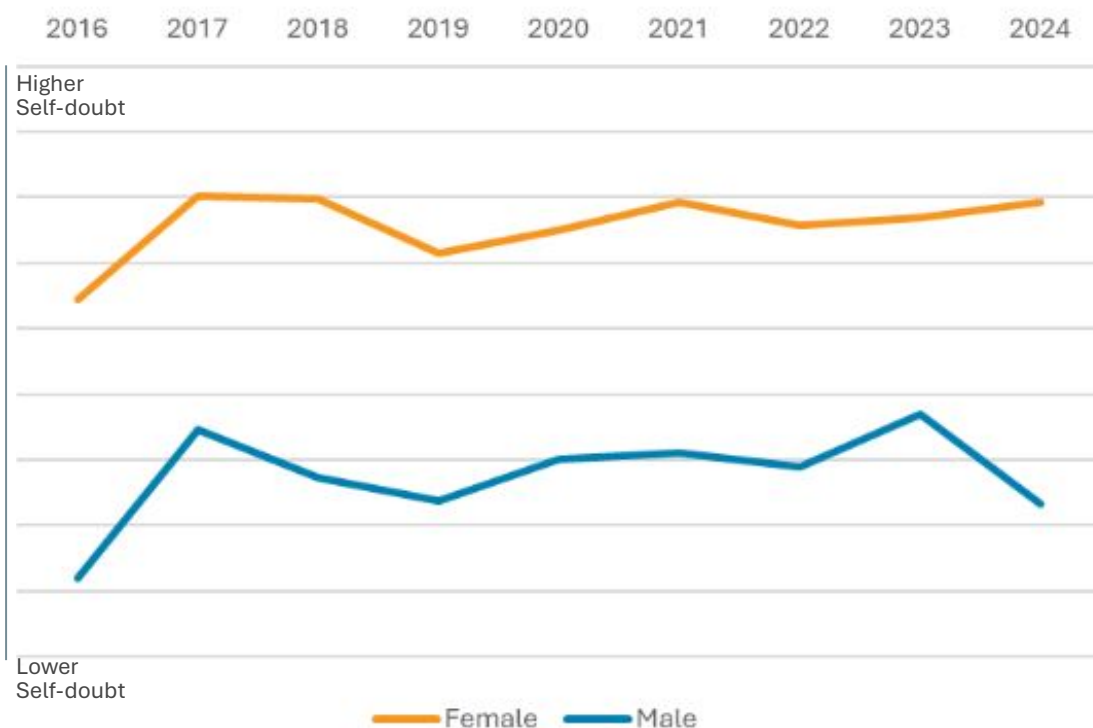


Figure 14. Persistent gender differences in feelings of self-doubt at work.
GLWS Survey Item mean score for **'I doubt myself more than I probably should at work'**



While these results provide specific reinforcement for widespread concerns about the current state and future risks to professional women’s psychological wellbeing and mental health, there are a couple of brighter spots where **women recorded significantly more positive Resilience & Equanimity** experiences:



Investing more purposeful effort than men into changing unhelpful thoughts, feelings or behaviours that are negatively impacting their wellbeing.



Expressing their emotions more constructively.

5



PHYSICALLY DRAINED & MORE DEPLETED: Despite Healthier Lifestyle Habits

Gender wellbeing trends in GLWS Vitality & Energy: 2016–2024

As previously mentioned (Page 21), no significant gender differences for GLWS Vitality & Energy exist at the *overall* dimension level for either Working Well or Living Well. However, as Figures 15 & 16 show, this does not mean the results are positive: a pattern of general decline is evident for both genders' overall physical and energetic wellbeing, in work and at home.

Figure 15. No significant gender differences in **work-related wellbeing:**
GLWS Vitality & Energy

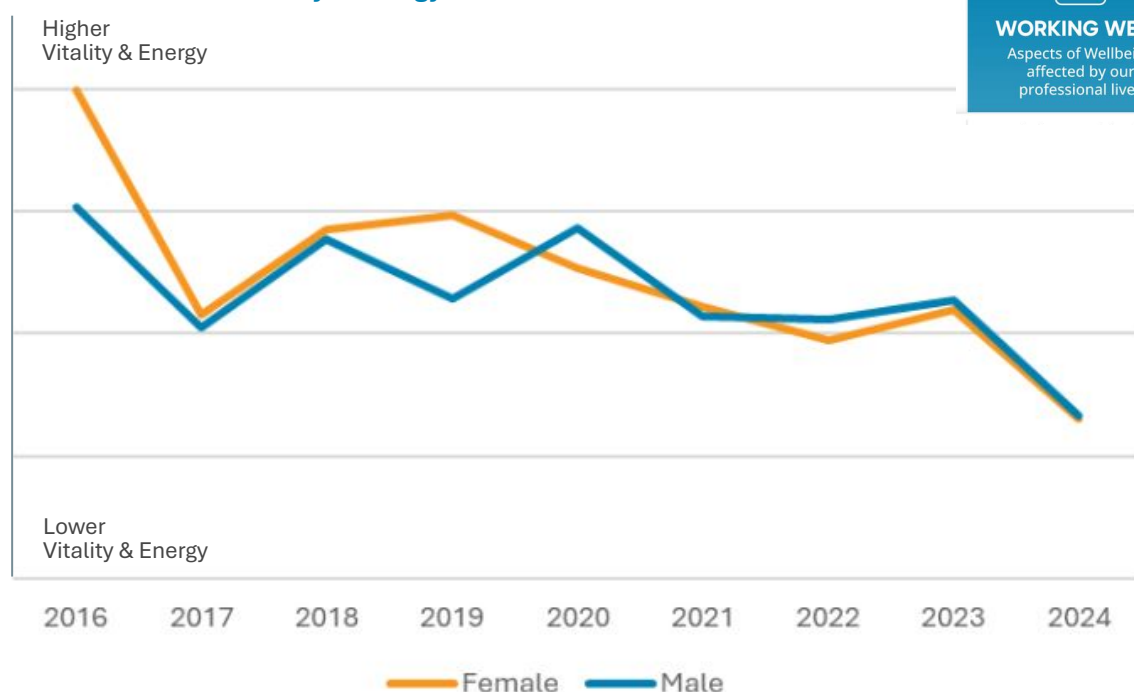


Figure 16. No significant gender differences in **personal wellbeing: GLWS Vitality & Energy**



An analysis of each of the 22 individual GLWS Survey questions that measure Vitality & Energy across both Working Well and Living Well reveals that significant gender differences *do* exist at this level. The differences are mixed, with approximately half of the items depicting women’s physical wellbeing as worse while the balance portray it as better. Hence, the mean score for the overall dimension is masking underlying key differences.

On the downside, the long-term trend shows that **women report feeling more physically drained and depleted in several ways:**

	Feeling less well rested at the start of a workday		Feeling more drained while working
	Taking fewer breaks during their workday to recharge		Spending longer sitting down while working
	Having lower levels of ‘get up and go’ or energy for work		Having less energy for things in their personal life

On a more positive note for women, despite lower scores on items measuring low energy and barriers to relaxation, **women reported healthier lifestyle habits in other key aspects:**

	Eating more nutritious food at work and at home		Having greater amounts of sleep
	Being more careful about their caffeine consumption		Prioritising preventative health appointments
	Limiting alcohol and drug use for stress relief		Using breathing as a technique to stay calm

Professional women’s commitment to establishing and maintaining healthier food, caffeine, hydration, sleep, and preventative health habits may be what enables them to ‘keep going’ despite the many negative challenges and stressor demands that have been identified.

Specific **Vitality & Energy** gender wellbeing inequalities: 2024

Looking only at the 2024 data, a detailed breakdown of the largest Vitality & Energy gaps is provided below in Figure 17.

Figure 17. Specific Vitality & Energy Gender Wellbeing Inequalities: 2024

	 FEMALE ^	 MALE^
Feeling drained at work	70%	60%
Not well rested at the start of the workday	63%	52%
Not enough get up and go or energy for work	40%	31%
Not enough time / energy for personal life	51%	38%

^The % of GLWS Survey respondents who responded they ‘always’, ‘usually’, or sometimes’ feel this way.

Women are more likely than men to feel fatigued, even at the start of their workdays. In the face of relentless demands at work and/or home, they rarely experience having enough time to pause, rest or recover. Unsurprisingly, their energy levels are lower.

Overall, these results for Vitality & Energy highlight several specific concerns and gendered differences in their energy levels, further supporting the observations that women are bearing a disproportionate brunt of the escalating demands.

Figure 18. Women feeling increasingly drained while working.
GLWS Survey Item mean score for **'I feel drained while working'**

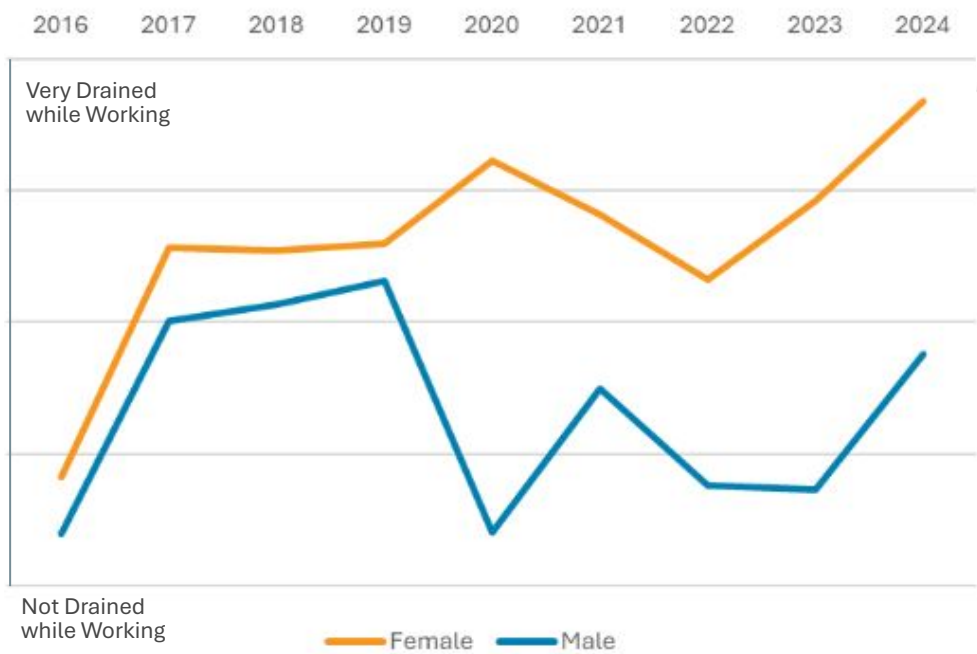
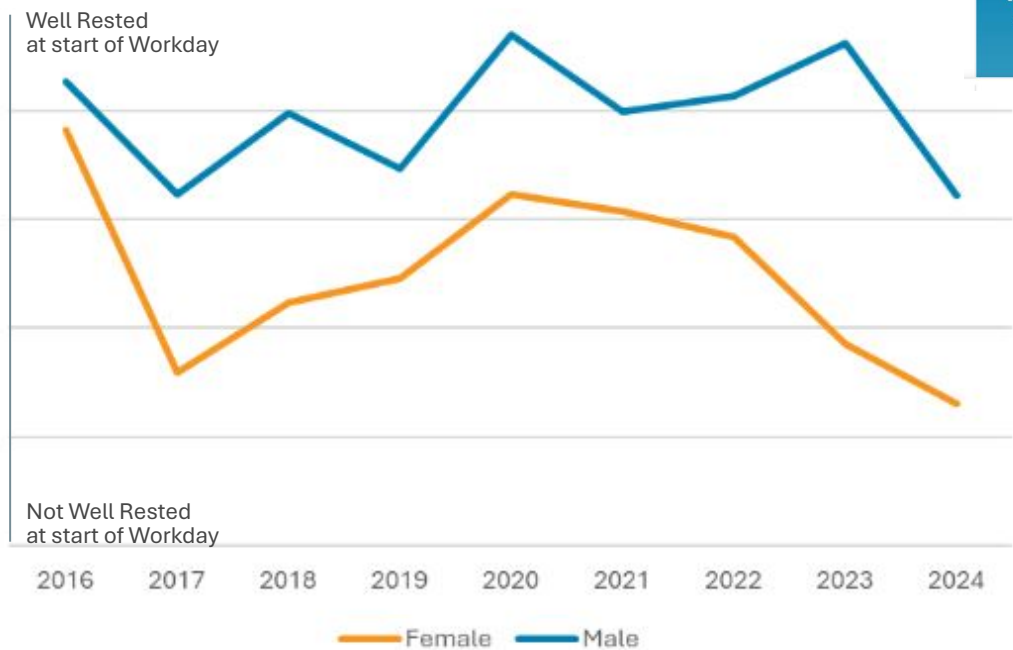


Figure 19. A sharp decline in women feeling rested.
GLWS Survey Item mean score for **'I feel well rested at the start of the work day'**





UNEQUAL PATHS: Lower Career Confidence, Agency & Optimism

Mixed messages and unfulfilled needs

Research exploring gender differences in careers typically cites a combination of societal expectations, gender stereotypes, work-life balance challenges, and self-doubt/imposter phenomenon as contributing factors to less career certainty among women. While our data aligns with these findings, it also reveals intriguing differences between men's and women's career sentiments, their perceptions of career, and crucially, clear linkages to wellbeing status.



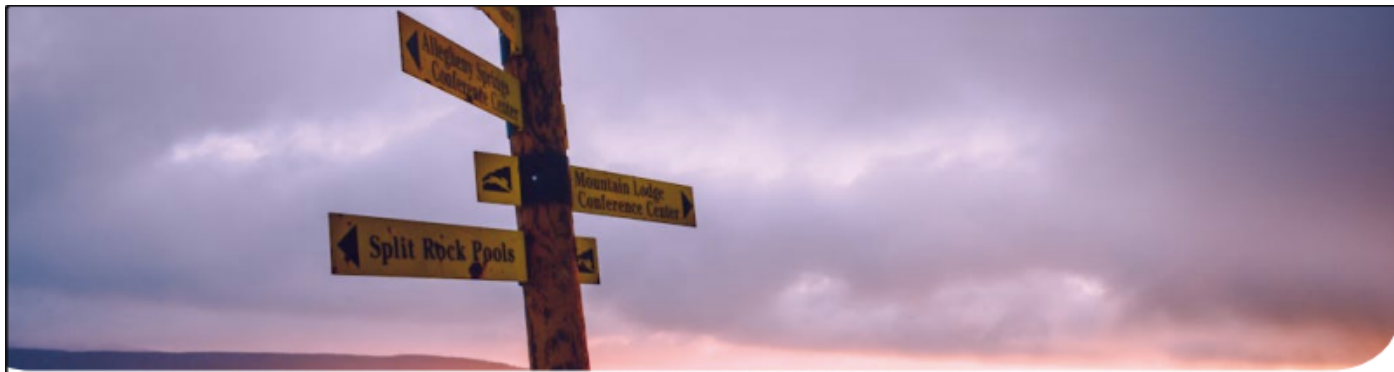
WORKING WELL

GLWS data shows women are significantly less likely to:

- Feel their work is valuable or makes a difference
- Have a clear direction for how they want their career to evolve
- Feel optimistic, confident or able to shape their career
- Feel they are well-suited to their job/role
- Feel positive about trusting their boss

They are also significantly **more** likely to make compromises in their career due to factors in their personal life.

*Despite (or perhaps because of) these negatives, and the many other discrepancies in Balance & Boundaries, Meaning, Purpose & Direction and Authentic Relationships discussed earlier in this report, **women in leadership and professional roles are significantly more likely to view their careers as central to their sense of identity.***



Figures 20 and 21 show more women than men feel ill-suited to their roles (27%^) and struggle to believe their work makes a meaningful difference (19%). Such experiences may *contribute* to lower rates of life-satisfaction and career certainty among professional women. Equally, these experiences may also occur as a *consequence* of those same issues. Undoubtedly, they are also connected with the confidence, self-doubt and psychological burdens identified previously. Together, the unknown interdependencies in this scenario illustrate the need for non-linear solutions.

Figure 20. Gender differences over time in GLWS item '**I think I am in the wrong job for me**'.

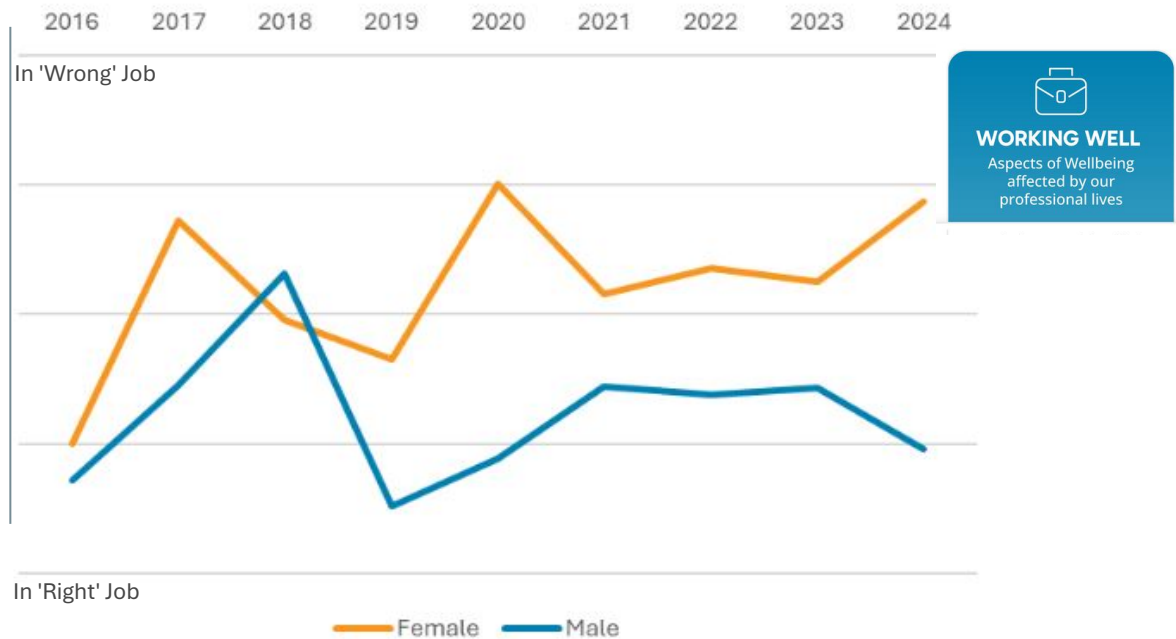
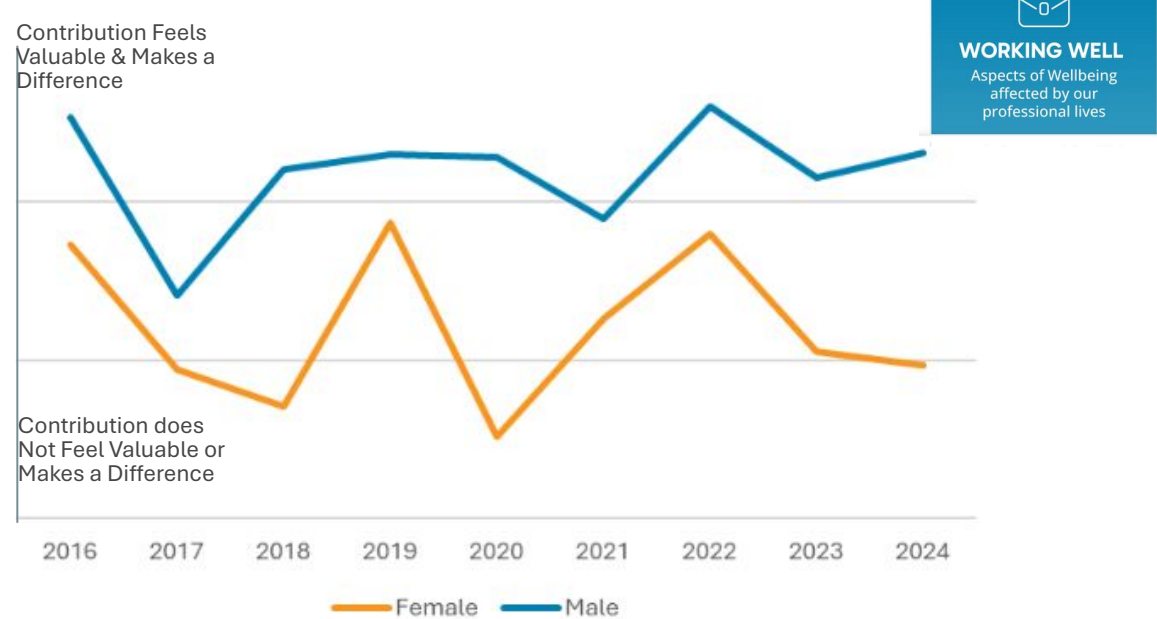
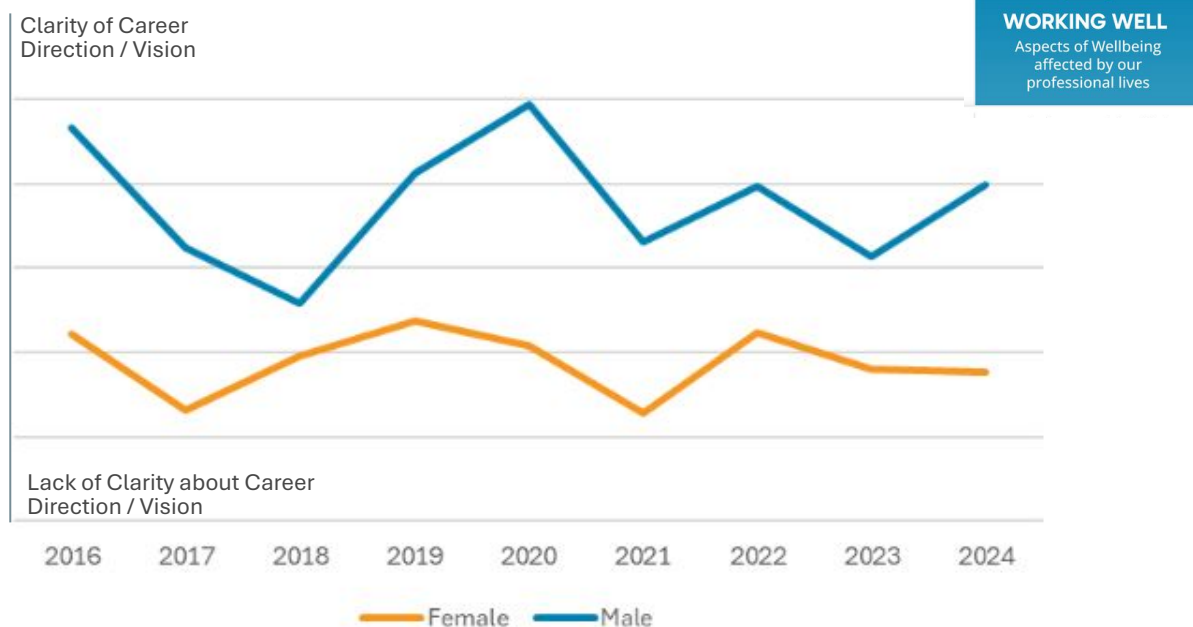


Figure 21. Gender differences over time in GLWS item '**I feel my contribution is valuable and makes a difference**'.



In 2024, **47% of women felt they did *not* have a clear direction or vision for how they wanted their careers to evolve[^]**. While these results haven't declined over time, compared to 35% for men, the gender differences remain apparent.

Figure 22. Gender differences over time in GLWS item '**I have a clear direction and vision for how I would like my career to evolve**'.



62%[^] of women have made compromises in their career due to factors in their personal life. For men the figure is 50%.

On the whole, women who are in leadership and senior professional roles exhibit greater uncertainty and questions about their career direction and are less confident in their ability to influence their careers than their male counterparts.

Additionally, senior women experience less alignment between their personal values and those of their employer, and less connection with their current careers, *despite work being a more important aspect of their identity*.

[^]27% of women
feel they are in the wrong job

[^]47% of women
do not have a clear career direction or vision

[^]The % of GLWS Survey respondents who responded they 'always', 'usually', or sometimes' feel this way.



SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

- 1 Our primary intentions in presenting these findings are to emphasise and examine the inherent complexity of gendered wellbeing, steer discussions away from framing women's wellbeing challenges as matters of personal concern attributable only to personal vulnerabilities, and to highlight the role of unknown interactions between individual and psychosocial factors that determine wellbeing, satisfaction, happiness and other outcomes in personal, professional and societal contexts.
- 2 We also hope this report will contribute to an enhanced understanding of the drivers and outcomes of all leaders' wellbeing as a combination of unique, dynamic and frequently subjective interactions and interdependencies.
- 3 Systemic workplace pressures and societal influences affect the vitality and overall wellbeing of both men and women. However, insights from the GLWS dataset reveal that these impacts differ by gender. Extensive research—including findings from GLWS—consistently reinforces the existence of an emerging and widening gender wellbeing gap, with women experiencing poorer wellbeing outcomes than their male counterparts.
- 4 Of course, gender is not the only factor affecting wellbeing; it also intersects with seniority, industry sector, tenure, care giving roles, education, location, income, culture, neurodiversity, race, sexuality, disability and other variables to create an almost infinite number of diverse lived realities. In an ideal world, individuals and their employers would explore this intersectionality and unique context to enable tailored, optimally effective personalised guidance for everyone.
- 5 At their highest level of extraction, the findings in this report reinforce the importance and value of integrating individual personal attributes, work environment, role responsibilities, team dynamics, leadership impact, organisational policies, home-life habits and personal circumstances into the evaluation of every person's wellbeing and consideration of their needs.

6 When we last formally explored these differences two years ago, we were just coming out of the catastrophic disruption of the pandemic, and were unsurprised to see a wellbeing drop occurring for both genders. What was worrisome though, was the prominent and still widening gender wellbeing gap that had emerged since the original analysis. It felt like a confronting backwards step, given the efforts to improve representation of women in leadership roles and rectify their pay inequities.

7 Fast forward a few years to 2025, and the findings outlined in this current report do nothing to alleviate our worry. Rather they continue to highlight the significant wellbeing tolls being paid by many professional women today, with wellbeing dropping in several areas and the overall decline continuing. For everyone's sake, we need the cost of progress to come down, and fast.

Implications



While our research does not explicitly enable causal analysis, the size of the data set and strength of the findings suggest there is compelling cause for concern.



The GLWS Gender Wellbeing Gap 2025 Insights Report points to a large number of inherently negative experiences, challenges and stressors that are placing women's wellbeing in jeopardy, at levels disproportionate to those experienced by men. There is less than a 1 in 1000 likelihood our findings are due to chance.



Despite concerted efforts by many organisations, programs and communities to protect and enhance wellbeing for all, including positive action initiatives to address gender specific needs and challenges, the breadth and depth of these results may be deeply troubling for progressive employers.



The findings are of relevance to any discussion about an organisation's culture, talent, leadership capabilities, psychosocial health risks, performance and success.



The decline in women's wellbeing and the growing gender wellbeing gap are complex issues. However, in addition to building individual wellbeing skills and better coping strategies, another clear implication is that they have been caused or at least exacerbated by the heightened pressures and pace of modern life, with escalating demands, technological advancements (or burdens), entrenched gender inequalities and societal norms, rolling back of flexible work options, and mixed societal and changing political views on gender issues.



By sharing the findings presented in this report, we are quietly hoping to also elevate the role of feminism and feminist practices as means for addressing gender dynamics in organisations; to reinforce the importance of challenging systems that are oppressive in organisations, and to promote the benefits of greater gender wellbeing equality for all, at work and at home.



Recommendations

Although we are not scholars of feminism, our work as practitioner executive coaches with leaders, both women and men, and our observations as business psychologists advising employers on optimising talent, capability, development, culture and performance, suggest the connections between gender wellbeing and success for individuals and organisations are often hiding in plain sight. The detailed analysis of each key finding indicates how GLWS dimensions can help reveal and examine the need to navigate power dynamics more thoughtfully, especially regarding maintaining healthy boundaries and supporting overall psychological and physical wellbeing.

Four feminist practices

Inspired by the academic and organisational work of [Dr Julie Scanlon](#), a specialist in challenging cultural and structural inequalities faced by women, we encourage applying feminist practices to individual and organisational wellbeing strategies, with the goal of empowering individuals to navigate and thrive in diverse environments. It will also highlight how organisations can collectively adapt and strengthen to confront and overcome systemic gender inequalities.

1. Gender as a Social Construct. Understanding gender as a pre-existing social mould that shapes expectations based on whether an individual is born as a girl or boy is a good starting point for considering the basis of gender wellbeing inequalities among professionals. Challenging these societal constructs helps to optimise personal growth and self-leadership. Reflecting on such questions helps individuals and their employers recognise and dismantle gender stereotypes, empowering more authentic and fulfilling lives. Psychological theories of self-determination and personal agency, and adult learning theories that distinguish between socialised and self-authored minds, offer practical mechanisms to do so. These principles are integrated into GLWS Framework dimensions through the survey items (e.g., how we are treated by others, feelings of recognition, respect and acknowledgment by others, empathy, balancing our needs with others', career compromises, self-doubt, expanding our minds, gratitude, confidence, anxiety, or optimism) and through the non-judgmental, un-normed approach the GLWS takes to evaluation.

2. Gender and Inclusivity. The GLWS encourages creating inclusive environments for all genders by promoting questioning of assumptions and understanding one's position within power structures. For example, the dimension of Authentic Relationships emphasises the importance of inclusion, support, sense of belonging, respect and equity in building healthy and supportive professional relationships as mechanisms for improving interpersonal dynamics and wellbeing.

3. Gender and Feminism. While feminism focuses on women because they have been disadvantaged by patriarchy, liberation from patriarchal structures benefits everyone. The GLWS dimensions of Meaning & Purpose and Balance & Boundaries reinforce the broader societal benefits of gender equality by helping individuals to reflect on their self-identity, find greater meaning and purpose, and exercise their freedoms and choices without conforming to societal ideals. When enacted by individuals and proactively facilitated by employers, this will ultimately lead to a more just and equitable society.

4. Gender and Challenging Oppressive Systems. The data and insights we have presented may be seen as an evidence-based call to action for leaders, influencers, decision makers and policy makers who are custodians of an organisation's standards, culture or work practices. Recognising and challenging organisational systems that are oppressive to achieving true gender equality i.e., equality that is measured not only by opportunity, representation and reward but also by wellbeing. Nowhere is the presence of wellbeing inequality greater than the results for the GLWS dimension of Resilience & Equanimity.

Critical reflections

We have identified and asked several questions below. These are recommended for all interested parties' reflection, consideration and further exploration of how gender impacts wellbeing, the key determinants of identified differences and how to make positive progress.



Who in your organisation needs to understand the gender wellbeing gap, and why does it matter to them?



What specific actions has your organisation taken—or could take—to address gendered wellbeing disparities?



Which roles, teams or systems are most responsible for mitigating the factors contributing to lower wellbeing among women?



What are the most significant wellbeing detractors for women in your workplace—and how can you amplify the enhancers?



How do job design, leadership practices and organisational culture influence gendered wellbeing outcomes in your context?



What targeted strategies could your organisation implement to close the gender wellbeing gap, and how will you measure progress?



How well does your organisation currently support the unique wellbeing needs of diverse groups (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality)?



In what ways might societal gender norms be shaping women's wellbeing experiences in your workplace, and what can be done to challenge them?



Critical reflections: continued

- ✓ What are the risks (culturally, ethically, and commercially) of failing to prioritise women's wellbeing in leadership and professional roles?
- ✓ How can your organisation actively challenge and redefine gender norms to foster a more equitable and psychologically safe environment?
- ✓ What systemic barriers are contributing to gender wellbeing disparities, and how can you co-create strategies to dismantle them?
- ✓ How can your organisation better support women during key transitions (e.g., motherhood, menopause, domestic abuse recovery)?
- ✓ How does the gender wellbeing gap intersect with other inequalities (e.g., pay, career progression, representation)?
- ✓ What support, skills and resources are needed to reduce the psychological burden on women in your workplace?
- ✓ How might future organisational or government policies better integrate women's wellbeing into gender equality frameworks?
- ✓ What research or data does your organisation need to better understand and address gendered wellbeing challenges?

Practical actions

Address systemic barriers



Identify what systemic barriers are contributing to gender wellbeing disparities in your organisation. Co-create a strategy to dismantle them. This should include implementing gender-sensitive policies to not only support the unique wellbeing needs of different genders, but also to address the other aspects of the organisation's culture, processes, practices, systems and culture that have an impact, for better or worse on attraction, performance evaluation, reward and recognition, learning, development, succession and retention.

Create inclusive environments



Promote inclusivity by encouraging individual and collective questioning of assumptions about and understanding of power dynamics within the workplace. Building a more inclusive environment requires, at a minimum, fostering healthy and supportive professional relationships, equality of opportunity, equitable distribution of quality work and opportunities for growth and impact.

Practical actions: continued



Get loud and sincere about work-life balance

Challenge how the organisation's flexible work policy and options might be differentially impacting senior professionals and leaders, and women's versus men's needs. Ensure leaders have autonomy and agency to establish work patterns and routines conducive to their work-life balance, without fear of repercussion or pressure to conform with any prevailing 'work ethic' defined by excessively long or inflexible hours. Significantly reduce the strain on women (and others) and enhance their overall wellbeing by actively managing detachment and appropriate downtime among leaders, with meaningful accommodation and adjustments to expectations and workloads.



Enhance leadership development

Offer targeted leadership development programs exploring specific gendered challenges. These programs should aim to build confidence and provide clear career direction.



Surface power dynamics

Encourage awareness of power dynamics and their impact on gender wellbeing. Ensure these are discussable agenda items. This is crucial for identifying, establishing maintaining healthy boundaries and supporting overall wellbeing.



Find, foster or make more meaning and purpose

Connect the importance of gender equality to broader organisational goals and individual purpose. Highlighting the benefits of gender equality can enhance motivation and engagement.



Don't overlook individual skills, resilience and positive protective coping strategies

Provide support, training and resources to build knowledge and skills among women. This can help them navigate career challenges and maintain psychological wellbeing.

By implementing these recommendations, organisations can be confident of creating a more equitable, physically and psychologically healthy workplace in which the wellbeing and success of women (and all employees) will ultimately be enhanced.



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ABOUT EEK & SENSE

EEK & SENSE is an independent Australian firm of business psychologists established in 2015 to support leaders, teams and organisations operating in high-stakes or complex environments.

Our advisory work is grounded in the principles of organisational psychology, leadership and capability development, and executive coaching with a particular focus on the intersection of wellbeing, performance, leadership and culture. We value justness, respect, compassion, collaboration and quality.

As consultants, we specialise in helping organisations and their leaders identify and implement individual and systemic changes that address the root causes of performance and cultural challenges — often accompanied by low wellbeing and high stress or burnout. Supporting gender equality by providing insights and solutions to meet the unique wellbeing needs of different genders is central to our mission.

Our focus is on how leadership cultures, practices and processes either enhance or undermine leaders' ability to sustain high performance and thrive, themselves and for others. We are best known for our insistence on putting 'care for leaders' at the heart of leadership culture and systems. But this doesn't mean we go soft on performance, quite the opposite.

We believe long-term success depends on treating performance and wellbeing in symbiosis, as opposite sides of the same coin. Leaders' capacity to consistently perform, deliver results and support others is inextricably linked to the development and preservation of their own psychological, mental and physical reserves.

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