

Executive summary



Active Care is about getting better outcomes for every person, every time.”



With the current barrage of media headlines about mortgage stress, rental accommodation shortages, job layoffs, long waits for urgent healthcare appointments, and people with mental health concerns being turned away from care, it's heartbreaking but not surprising that many of our members are reporting feeling stressed, and are having trouble coping with everyday tasks.

This quarter's report focusses on stress and coping. It explores how stress comes in different forms and levels of severity, and explains why poor wellbeing presents a financial and safety risk to organisations, as well as a personal health risk to employees.

Our evidence for the period October to December 2022 comes from the following proprietary sources:

- 10,000+ active member support cases;
- 7,000+ respondents to our Sonder Wellbeing Assessment;
- 2,000 employees surveyed in our Annual Workforce Survey;
- Sonder's Voice of Member survey; and
- Sonder's in-app resources.

We look forward to discussing the outcomes of this report with you and welcome your feedback.

Best,
Craig Cowdrey
CEO

TREND 1

Many people are having trouble coping with everyday tasks

An alarming 50 per cent of the 7,118 respondents to our in-app Sonder Wellbeing Assessment reported having trouble coping with everyday tasks several times a week.

In the same period, 76 per cent of respondents had trouble coping at least once in the prior 30 days. This suggests many people are not well.

This presents a financial risk to organisations because poor wellbeing can create an expensive "ripple effect". It can impact not only one person's workforce participation and productivity - via absenteeism, presenteeism, and workers' compensation - but also that of their colleagues, family members, and close friends.

To cope with everyday life, 43 per cent of members who completed the Sonder Wellbeing Assessment reported self-medicating with drugs, alcohol, or medications. Ten percent self-medicated daily, 10 per cent several times a week, 9 per cent once a week, and 14 per cent once or twice a month.



This presents not only a personal health risk - if the medication is inappropriate, unhelpful, and/or counteracting other medications - but an organisational risk for individuals conducting safety-critical tasks."

Dr Jamie Phillips
MB ChB, AFCHSM, DIMC RCS(Edin),
MRCGP(UK), FACRRM(EM)
Medical Director, Sonder



Sonder Wellbeing Assessment

Check your wellbeing

Our 3-minute Sonder Wellbeing Assessment is a friendly, confidential, and optional tool developed by our clinicians to complement our human care.



Take this confidential 3 minute assessment, and we'll provide you with personalised support to boost your overall wellbeing.

[Get started](#)

Most-viewed self-help articles after completing the Sonder Wellbeing Assessment

- 1 [5 tips on keeping anxiety at bay](#)
- 2 [How you can sleep better](#)
- 3 [The importance of mindfulness](#)
- 4 [Building healthy relationships](#)
- 5 [What is fatigue?](#)
- 6 [How to get a better work-life balance](#)
- 7 [What is burnout?](#)
- 8 [6 ways to build a positive mindset](#)
- 9 [Mental health resources](#)
- 10 [7 podcasts for sleep, relaxation, and sleep science](#)

After completing the Sonder Wellbeing Assessment, it's encouraging to see so many members proceed to access our in-app articles to help them cope.

Data sources: Sonder Wellbeing Assessment, Sonder app.

TREND 2

Most people self-reporting stress don't need a psychologist

After our clinical assessment, a significant 77 per cent of members who self-reported they were feeling stressed did not require formal mental health treatment.

An upfront clinical assessment helps members who don't need a psychologist because they can benefit immediately from guided self-management. It also helps members who would benefit from formal psychological support by rapidly identifying and matching them to the best psychologist for their needs.

Working within a stepped care model, our qualified clinical team is able to provide immediate, right-fit assistance - to help people when, where, and how they need it - empowering them to take active control of their wellbeing without delay.

In our follow-up survey of members who were recommended facilitated self-care, 84 per cent reported they were satisfied with that level of support and did not require further assistance.

Members who self-reported feeling stressed

Required a psychologist
23%

Did not require a psychologist
77%



“
I felt that I was being heard. I was able to speak with someone immediately and I felt there was value in the advice and resources I was provided with.”
Member feedback

“
The support options always seem to surprise me! Articles, web links, apps etc. It's great how different and creative the approaches have been right across the board.”
Member feedback

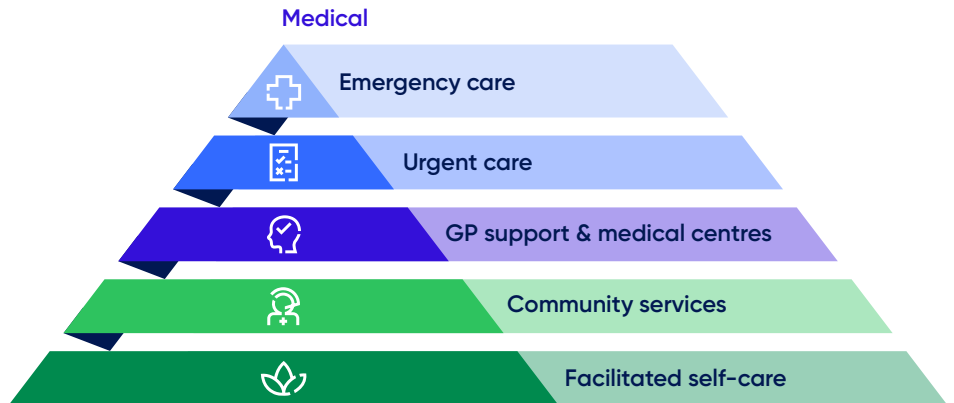
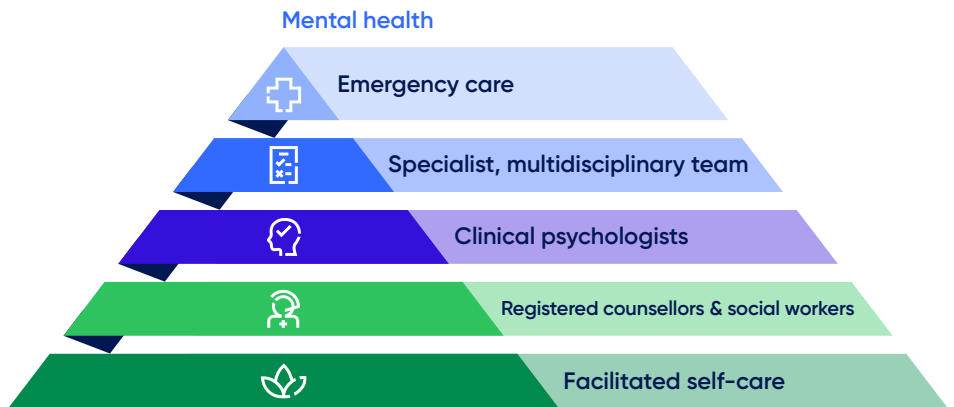
Data sources: Sonder's 10,000+ active member support cases (Oct-Dec 2022), Sonder's Voice of Member survey.

What is stepped care?

Stepped care is an evidence-based, staged system of care. It comprises a hierarchy of interventions, from the least to the most intensive, to help match an individual's needs to the most appropriate level of care.

Each type and level of stepped care is not mutually exclusive. Our holistic wellbeing model recognises that an individual's wellbeing support needs are often complex, and most members are contending with multiple, intertwined challenges.

This means they might be connected to any combination of stepped care types and levels, at the same or different times for each of their unique concerns, in order to achieve the best overall outcome.



TREND 3

Stress can impact work performance, but not all stress is bad

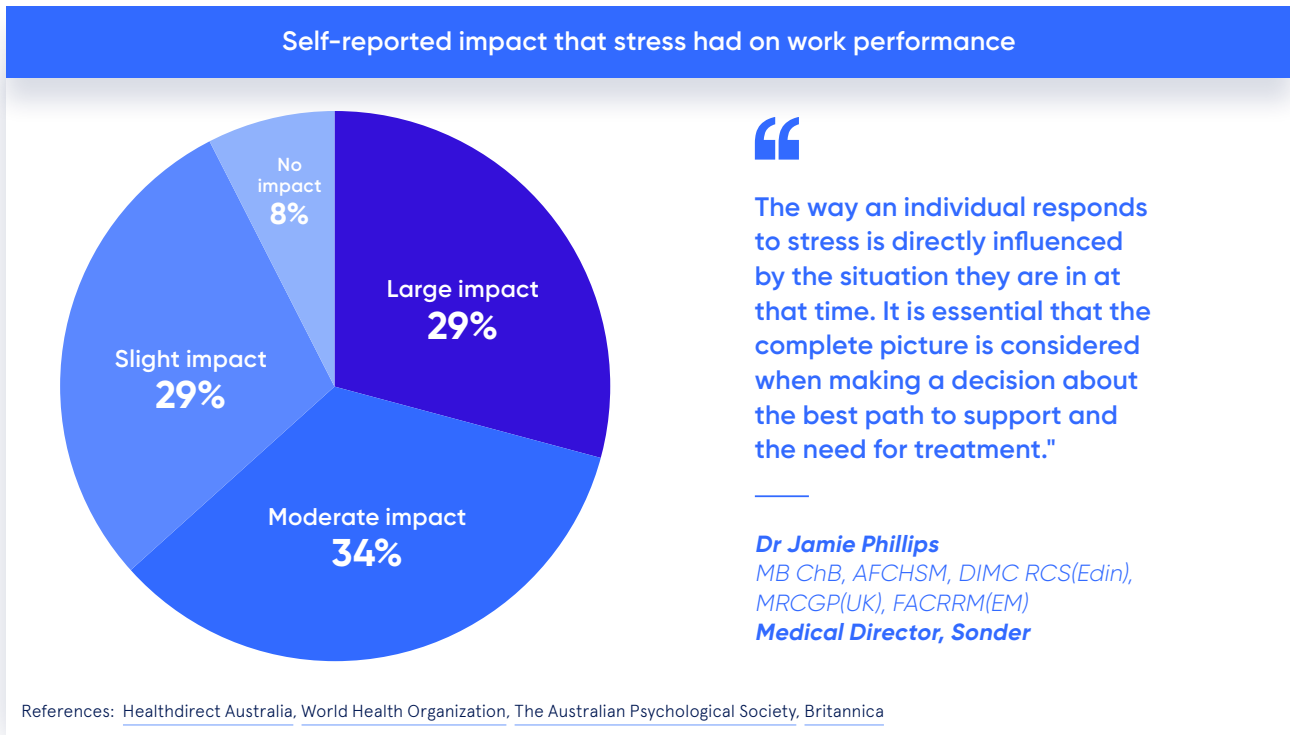
A high 92 per cent of 2,000 surveyed employees who experienced stress said it impacted their work performance. However, an analysis into the responses showed their wellbeing was only impacted when they were exposed to frequent stress.

Stress is a common and normal physical response to challenging or new situations. It is the body’s response to anything that requires urgent attention or action and can be defined as any type of change that causes physical, emotional, or psychological strain.

Stress in the form of a mild challenge can be beneficial as it provides the brain and body a chance to practice their adaptive response in preparation for future challenges.

There are two main types of stress, as defined by the duration and intensity:

- **Acute stress**, which activates the fight-or-flight response of the sympathetic nervous system but lasts for a short period of time.
- **Chronic stress**, which is characterised by long-term exposure to stressors, resulting in persistent activation of the body’s stress response.



Sonder's Annual Workforce Survey

Nearly half of the 2,000 employees we surveyed reported they had experienced stress more than five times in the previous 12 months, with only seven per cent not experiencing stress at all.

Of those who experienced stress, 92 per cent said it impacted their work performance, with 29 per cent reporting it had a large impact on their work performance.

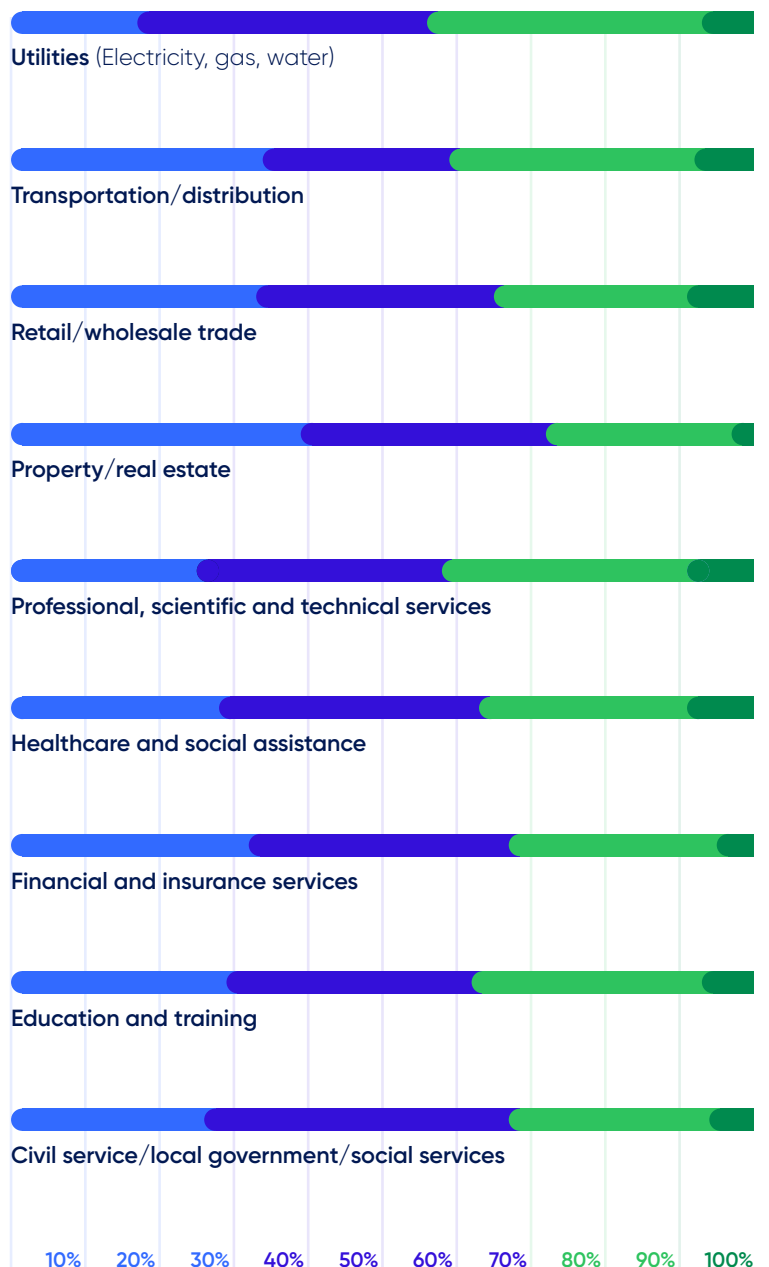
When broken down by industry, workers in the education and training industry perceived that stress impacted their work performance more than in any other industry in our survey.

Conversely, workers in the professional, scientific, and technical services industry perceived that stress impacted their work performance less than any other industry in our survey.

Data sources: Sonder's Annual Workforce Survey, October 2022 (conducted by McGregor Tan), which surveyed 2,000 employees in Australia working a minimum of 20 hours per week.



Self-reported impact that stress had on work performance (by industry)



SUMMARY

What do these wellbeing trends mean for your organisation?

Contributed by Fiona McUtchen, BA, BSc, Registered Psychologist, MAPS, HR Leader APAC

Stress is certainly not new to the world of work or indeed the human condition. A healthy amount of stress can drive us and help us respond to difficult challenges. But as these latest findings reveal, heightened, chronic stress can have a debilitating effect on our ability to cope – even with the everyday.

Whilst it’s encouraging to see members actively seek support, and benefit from interventions that have met them where they’re at, we need to catch people upstream before chronic stress sets in. As business leaders, we need to ensure the cultures we shape control for, not contribute to, unnecessary pressure.

This report is also a powerful reminder of the importance of maintaining our efforts when it comes to helping employees build sustainable and robust coping strategies. Too many people seem to be turning to temporary, counterproductive, and potentially harmful coping measures unlikely to serve them either now or in the future.

ACTIONS

Reframe stress

Leaders can build their team’s awareness around the dynamic, individual nature of stress, and its relationship to wellbeing and performance. Individuals that learn to identify their unique stress triggers can better isolate the ones that can be harnessed to optimise their performance, versus those stressors that are overwhelming and need to be proactively managed.

Catch people upstream

Leaders are often the first to see signs of heightened stress and are in a powerful position to address stressors that emerge on the job (e.g. an unachievable deadline, growing uncertainty, and broken processes or systems). Leaders need to create a psychologically safe space for stress levels to be discussed, and encourage team members to tackle issues early.

The ‘busyness paradox’

In many teams and locations there are subcultures of ‘busyness’ that have been reinforced over multiple years and where working at a relentless, frenetic pace is equated with success and value. Taking bold action to reset values and priorities in these areas is key to managing work-related stress at scale.

About us

Sonder is an active care technology company that helps organisations improve the wellbeing of their people so they perform at their best.

Our mobile app provides immediate, 24/7 support from a team of safety, medical, and mental health professionals - plus onsite help for time-sensitive scenarios.

Accredited by the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS), our platform gives leaders the insights they need to act on tomorrow's wellbeing challenges today.



Immediate assessment

Chat with a Sonder care specialist in 15 seconds or less - day or night



In-person response

Get on-the-ground assistance so you're not alone in difficult times



Sonder specialists

Access our clinical team of registered nurses, doctors, psychologists, and more



Wellbeing resources

Build a happier, healthier you - in just a few minutes a day



Safety scanning

Avoid unsafe situations and outcomes before they arise