

TRAVELER WELLBEING:  
**MANAGE STRESS**

Research Insights

June 2023



# Introduction

This is the fifth and the last in a series of Insights reports on Traveler Wellbeing, which have been compiled by BCD Travel together with our Marketplace travel wellness partner Sanctifly, the global provider of healthy leisure and wellness alternatives for airport downtime. This report looks at the importance of mental and physical health for business travelers. We explore their interest in the employers' support helping to alleviate stress and assess what's currently on offer.

The Insights on Traveler Wellbeing combine data from both traveler and travel buyer wellbeing surveys conducted by BCD in 2022, as well as data compiled by Sanctifly.

Sanctifly provides access to over 3,500 premium airport activities, exclusive membership benefits, bespoke travel wellness content from industry experts and carefully curated healthy airport guides, all within one app. It aims to make traveler experience more pleasant and healthy. Members enjoy access to thousands of gym and pool locations worldwide to workout and energize, as well as luxury hotel gym, pool and spa facilities to boost traveler wellbeing.



This report explores **the importance of mental wellbeing for business travelers** and **support from their employers** in helping to alleviate traveler stress.

# How stress affects business travelers

## Business travel impacts employees' physical and mental state

Stress is one of the biggest problems among frequent business travelers. It is an inevitable part of working life, but many fail to acknowledge it.

Business travelers often suffer from stress as a result of long working hours, disrupted sleep patterns, jet lag, and unhealthy diet. A traveler's physical and emotional state depends on many factors, one impacts the other, and both are of great importance for business travelers.

According to BCD's Traveler Wellbeing survey, mental health was found to influence the travel arrangements of over a third of traveling employees, while physical health impacts nearly half of business travelers. It is important that business travelers manage their stress levels while on the road to protect their health and reduce the risk of long-term negative effects, and not just to ensure they can perform their work effectively.

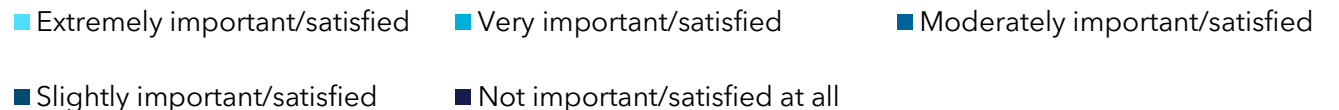
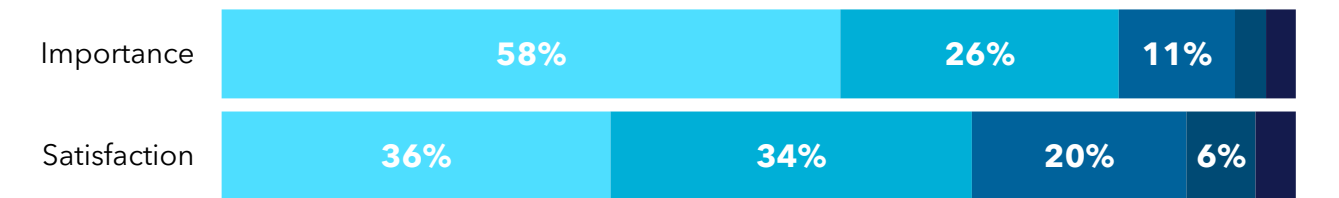
Employer support plays an important role in alleviating traveler pain points related to their health while on a business trip. As reported by business travelers, both physical and mental wellbeing support from their companies are extremely or very important to 85% of the sample. But their satisfaction levels with the measures provided are about 10 points lower. This is the case for both physical and mental health support.

### Wellbeing: Importance vs. satisfaction

#### Physical wellbeing support



#### Mental wellbeing support



# How to reduce business travelers' stress

## Mental wellbeing support needs to be of interest to employees

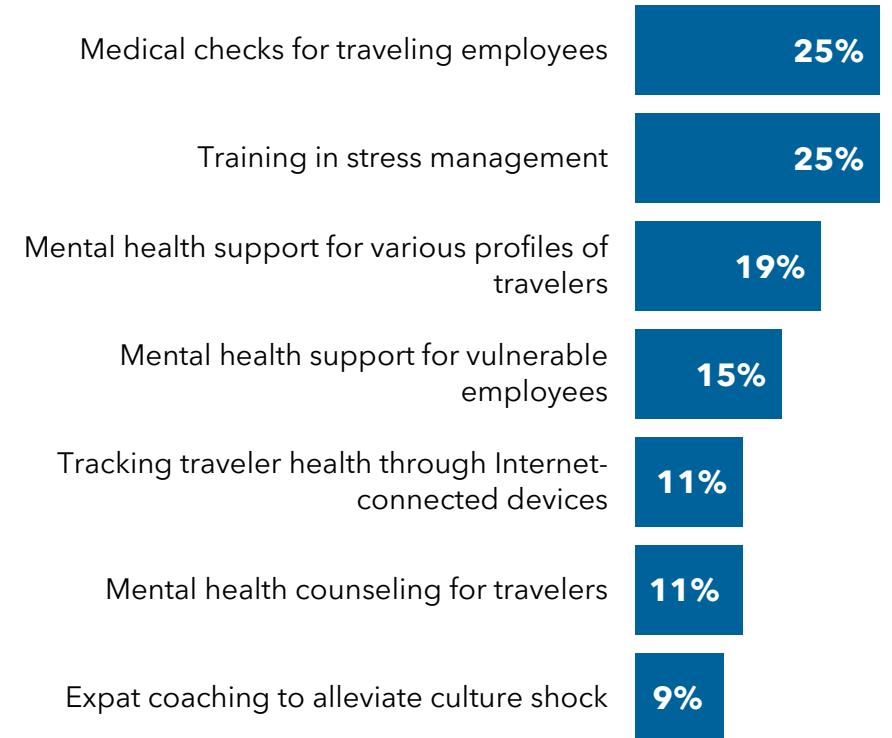
In the Traveler Wellbeing Survey, we looked at various support measures provided by employers from which business travelers could benefit. In this report, we focus only on those services that may improve mental wellbeing of traveling employees. For physical wellbeing support, check other reports from the series on Traveler wellbeing: [Get moving](#), [Eat well](#) and [Sleep well](#).

Among various health support measures, a considerable share of travelers would like to have access to regular medical checks: A quarter would benefit from having these checks available. The same proportion is interested in training in stress management. Nearly every sixth traveler expresses an interest in mental health support for specific traveler profiles, including vulnerable employees. Just around 10% would make use of mental health counseling for travelers or coaching for expatriates to facilitate their adjustment to a new culture. Tracking health through internet-connected devices whilst being on the road is of interest to a similar share of travelers.

Meditation is another activity that can help travelers to control their mental wellbeing and reduce stress. It is about training the mind to become more aware of what is happening, acquiring the skills to become less reactive to outside unpleasant experiences, and developing self-awareness, emotional intelligence and creativity. At the moment, less than 10% of travelers regularly meditate on the road. For more details on meditation see [Traveler Wellbeing: Reset your mindset](#).

It's important to note that physical health support is demanded by a larger group of travelers, in comparison to services for mental wellbeing. The latter have a quicker, more tangible outcome provoking interest of many. Awareness of mental wellbeing hasn't yet peaked due to the topic being rather sensitive. Business travelers may feel vulnerable revealing their mental health issues to their employer. Education around the importance of mental health and reassurances of complete privacy by employers will help address this issue within an organization.

### Wellbeing support for business travelers



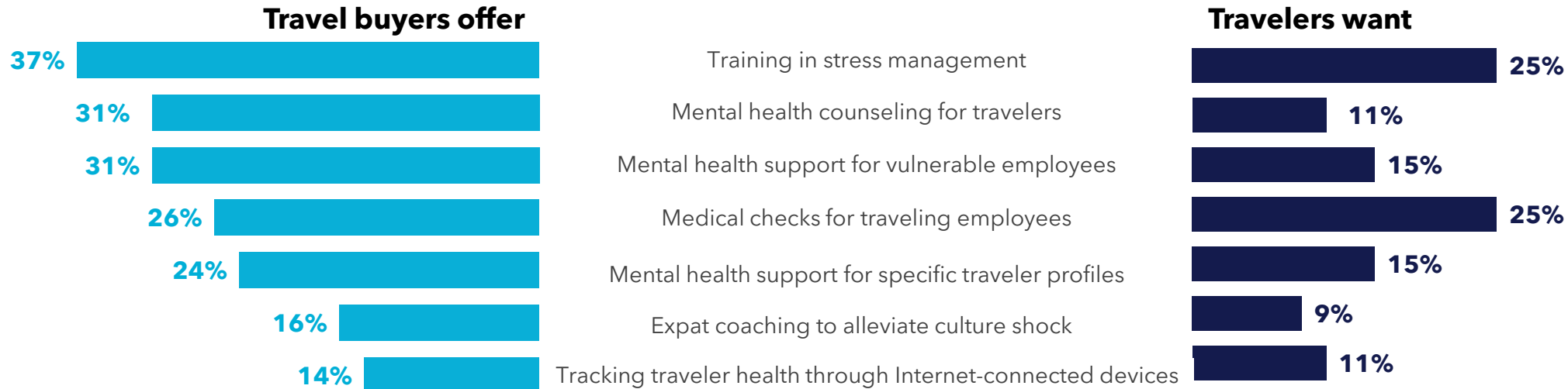
# Employers' support of traveler wellbeing

## What's on offer exceeds traveler interest in mental wellbeing support

Traveler mental wellbeing support is not in high demand from traveling employees with employers offering more than travelers say they need. Training in stress management is the top measure provided by almost 4 in 10 travel buyers, which is higher than the quarter of travelers showing interest in it. This is followed by mental health support for travelers, including for vulnerable groups of travelers: These measure are reported to be available by 3 in 10 travel buyers, while a quarter offer medical checks or dedicated support for specific profiles.

Comparing these results with the traveler views, we notice that travelers' interest in the services for mental wellbeing is lower than in physical wellbeing support. Meanwhile, the employers pay attention to this area. Sometimes, their offer is higher than what's demanded by employees. The items where supply and demand are most aligned are medical checks and health tracking: Traveler interest is as high as the supply. The largest discrepancies exist when it comes to mental health counseling and the support of specific profiles: Few employees are interested in these measures being provided by their organizations.

### Wellbeing support: Travel buyers vs. travelers



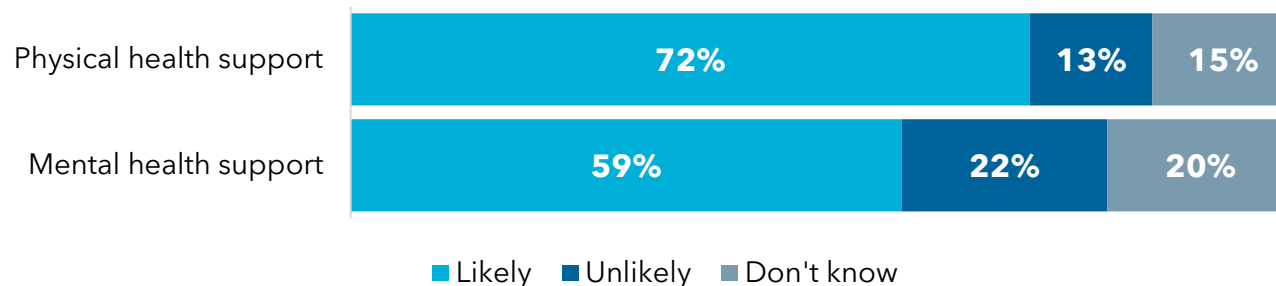
# Wellbeing tools and services

## Dedicated tools could alleviate traveler stress

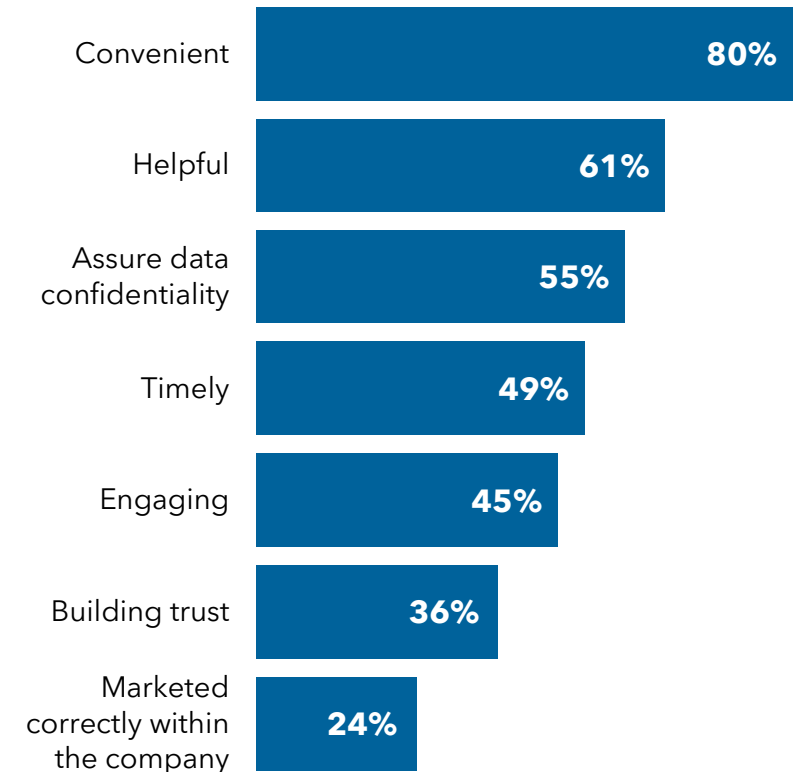
Corporate initiatives to improve the traveler experience may provide support to both the physical and mental wellness of traveling employees. As research shows, over 7 in 10 business travelers are likely to use the wellbeing support tools and services provided by their employers, and 6 in 10 say the same about mental health support.

For business travelers to use these wellbeing support tools, they need to be both convenient and helpful. More importantly, travelers must be reassured that such tools will treat sensitive mental health information with the utmost of confidentiality. This should help build much-needed awareness of mental health in the context of travel.

### Likelihood of use of wellbeing support tools and services provided by employer



### Selection criteria for wellbeing tools



# Mobile apps for mental support

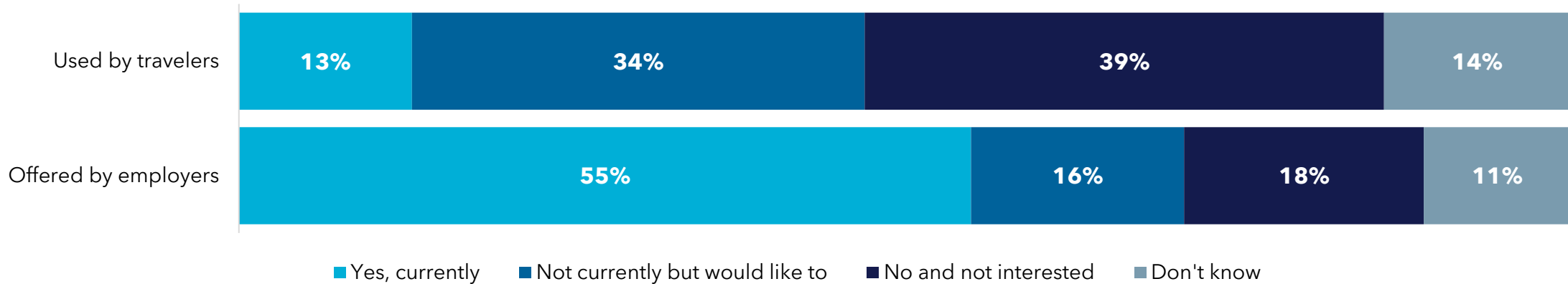
## Technology could help travelers alleviate stress on the road

Technology is of great help not only for physical but also mental wellbeing support while on the road. Currently, 58% of business travelers use various apps for wellbeing and three quarters are likely to apply physical health support tools and services provided by their employer. Female travelers tend to use wellbeing apps more often: 73% of women apply these apps vs. 51% of men.

Among travelers, only 13% use mobile apps for mental health support, while a third are interested in using them. Meanwhile, 4 in 10 report having no interest in using apps provided by employers to alleviate their stress and improve mental health while on the road.

On the supply side, over half of travel buyers report their companies providing such apps: 55%, compared with 13% of business travelers that currently use these apps. Less than a fifth of travel buyers don't offer such apps and are not interested in doing so in the future. Compared to the apps for physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing apps are used less frequently. This topic needs additional effort to increase employees' awareness and encourage them to use external support.

### Wellbeing apps for mental health support



# Traveler interest in facilities for mental wellbeing



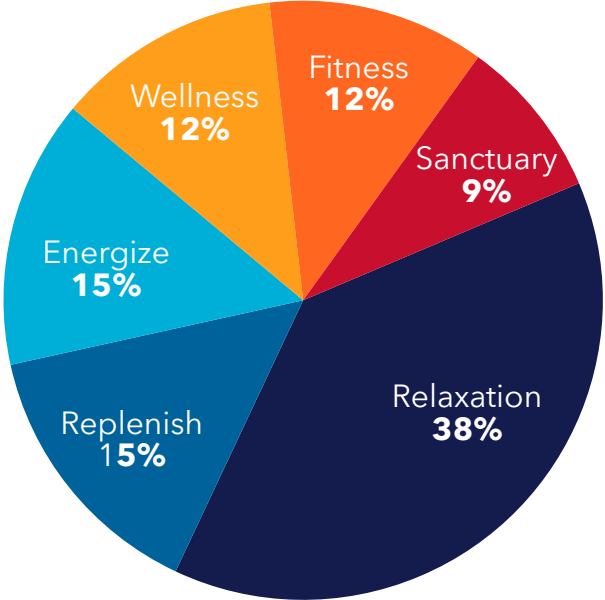
## Dedicated airport facilities could help travelers mitigate stress

Our Marketplace partner Sanctifly offers travelers a choice of airport activities to boost their personal wellbeing. These activities may require anything between one and six hours or more depending on the needs of clients and the free time at their disposal, as they are usually practiced either before a flight or in-between connecting flights.

All the activities can be classified by mood which reflects traveler interests. Here are six major categories of mood and the corresponding services available to book through a Sanctifly app:

- Relaxation: airport lounge options
- Replenish: cafes, restaurants, shops with fresh food
- Energize: shower amenities and walks
- Wellness: gym, pool, spa and massage options
- Fitness: gym, pool, runs and walks
- Sanctuary: quiet places to disconnect, such as lounges and hotel spaces

Traveler search: By mood



All categories of services have their role in boosting traveler physical and mental wellbeing, alleviating traveler stress and helping them to rest. **Relaxation** is solicited the most, being sought by 38% of Sanctifly users at various airports and hotels nearby. **Sanctuary**, the category that looks at quiet places to relax, provoked interest of every tenth traveler. **Energize, Fitness** and **Wellness** are the categories focusing on physical wellbeing, but their effect on mental health is non-negotiable. Each one was sought by 12-15% of the users in the last half a year (Oct. 6, 2022 - April 4, 2023).



While travel has gone through some major changes in the past few years, the stresses that potentially come with it remain the same. What we have noticed is traveler awareness of the impacts of stress, desiring more options to manage and minimize them, and a growing demand in searches for Sanctuary spaces for quiet zones.

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