

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE: THE CHINESE PICTURE

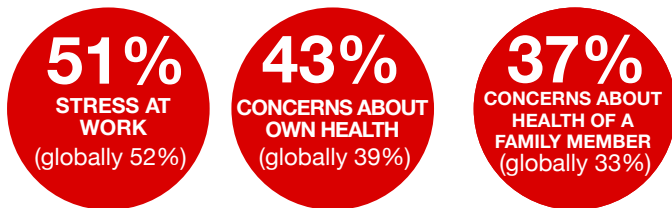


SECTION 1.

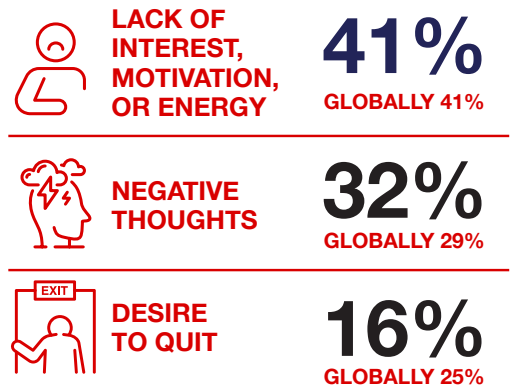
THE STATE OF WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH



ISSUES EXPERIENCED IN THE PRIOR MONTH:



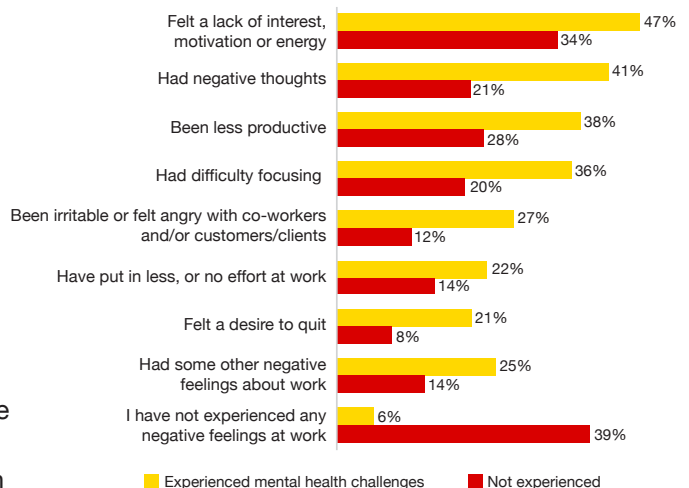
FEELINGS AT WORK IN THE PRIOR MONTH:



At 48%, Chinese workers' experience of mental health issues is slightly less prevalent than seen globally (52%), with fewer workers (59%) having concerns about their mental health (68% globally). When asked whether they had felt negative emotions at work over the previous month, 94% of workers who have experienced mental health issues in China said they had felt one or more (compared to 61% of Chinese employees who have not experienced mental health issues).

A lack of interest, motivation or energy – symptoms often associated with burnout - was the most commonly experienced by those affected by mental health challenges (47% vs 34% amongst those not affected). Having negative thoughts came second (41% vs 21%). Worryingly, 38% said their productivity was reduced (vs 23%), and just under three in ten (27%) felt angry or irritable towards co-workers or clients (vs 12%) – showing the extent to which mental health can influence behaviours and mindsets in the workplace.

Feelings at work



The proportion of people feeling stress at work in the month before the survey is highest among millennials (61%). However, for Chinese Gen Zs, concerns about health come first, affecting 51% of that generation.



While the reasons behind a person's mental health issues are often complex, the data shows that work-related causes could play a significant role. Fifty-one percent of Chinese workers mention they experienced stress at work in the month before the survey – making it the highest-ranking issue of the seven issues measured before concerns about health overall. That proportion is even higher among millennials (61%). However, for Chinese Gen Zs, concerns about health come first,

affecting 51% of that generation. They are also more likely to have difficulty focusing (45%) than the average Chinese worker (41%).

In China, most factors around work are seen to be supporting workers' mental health rather than undermining it – more noticeably so than seen globally. For example, 53% of employees feel their work culture supports their mental health (globally, 36%), while only 7% feel it undermines (18%).

SECTION 2.

STIGMA AND THE BARRIERS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AT WORK

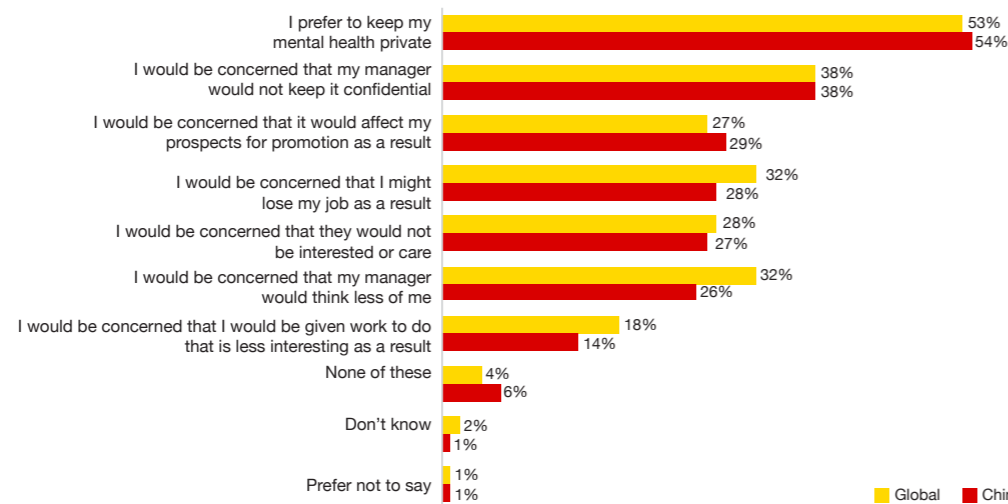
In China, stigma is still holding people back from sharing mental health issues at work, although at a lower level than seen globally. Thirty percent of Chinese respondents overall feel there is stigma in their workplace around mental (37% globally). In those workplaces, 50% of those affected by mental health challenges say they have felt stigma personally as a result of these issues (vs 57% globally).

Among those affected by poor mental health in China, 50% have told their managers about their issues, slightly less than the global average of 53%, and 53% of those have been discriminated against as a result (50% globally). Perhaps unsurprisingly, only 47% percent of workers say they would be willing to share mental health issues with their manager (markedly lower than the global average of 56%) and 50% would be comfortable disclosing them as the reason for taking time off (61% globally).



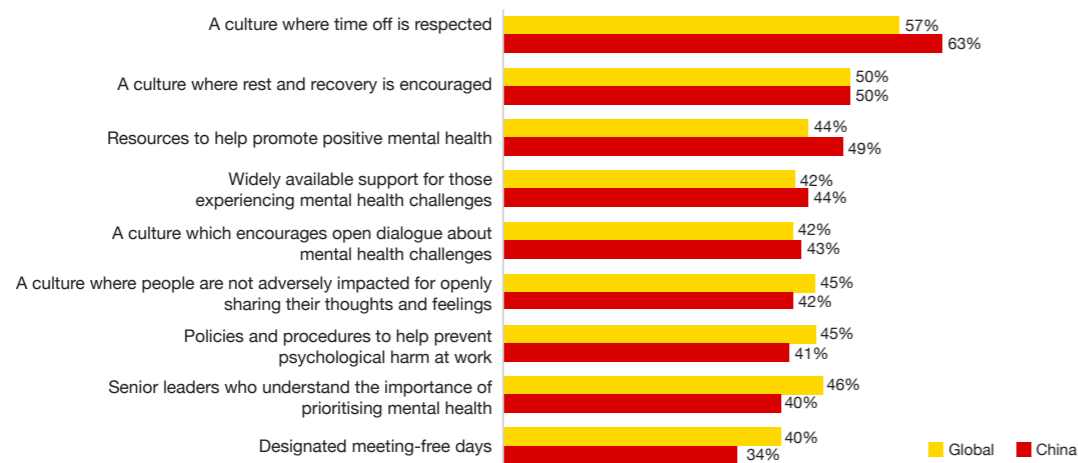
In terms of reasons for not disclosing mental health issues as the cause of people's absence, preference for privacy (54%) comes first. But other reasons point to stigma: nearly four in ten worry that managers would not keep issues confidential (38%, equal to global average), while three in ten fear that their prospects would be affected (29%) or that they would lose their job (28%).

Reasons for not disclosing mental health as the reason for taking time off



When reflecting on the policies and cultural aspects which support mental health in their organisation, 63% of Chinese workers say there is a culture where time off is respected (vs 57% globally). This is followed by a culture of rest and recovery being encouraged (50%, equal to the global average) and resources to help promote positive mental health (49% vs 44%). However, workers in China are less positive than the global average on measures around psychological safety and leaders' understanding of the importance of mental health.

Workplace culture and policies that are in place



SECTION 3.

SETTING THE TONE: THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF LEADERSHIP ON MENTAL HEALTH

Seventy-two percent of workers in China feel that it's extremely or very important for employers to look after the mental health of their workforce, compared to 73% globally. But only 61% percent believe that supporting employee mental health is a top or high priority for their leaders (globally, 56%), and only 40% consider they have senior leaders who understand the importance of prioritising mental health (46% globally). When asked whether the head of their organisation talks about mental health, 46% answer positively, above the global average (40%).

Within organisations where leaders do not vocally address mental health, 55% of respondents think they should. This number is slightly lower than the global average (59%).

Yet the research shows a clear improvement in perceptions and attitudes to work when heads of organisations choose to speak about mental health: in organisations where they do speak, 85% of workers feel their organisation cares about their mental wellbeing, whereas only 22% do when their leaders do not address it.

A clear narrative from senior leaders on mental health also correlates with more people opening up about their own issues: where heads of organisations speak about mental health, 68% of people are willing to disclose their issues to their managers, compared to 24% where they don't.

Crucially, whether senior leaders speak about mental health or not seems to impact workers' feelings about their place of work: those in organisations where senior leaders do not speak up are more likely to feel a lack of interest, motivation or energy (51% vs 34%), have negative thoughts (39% vs 29%). Twice as many feel a desire to quit (20% vs 11%).



46%

Heads of organisations speak out (globally 40%)



55%

Would like their head of organisation to speak out, where they do not already (globally 59%)



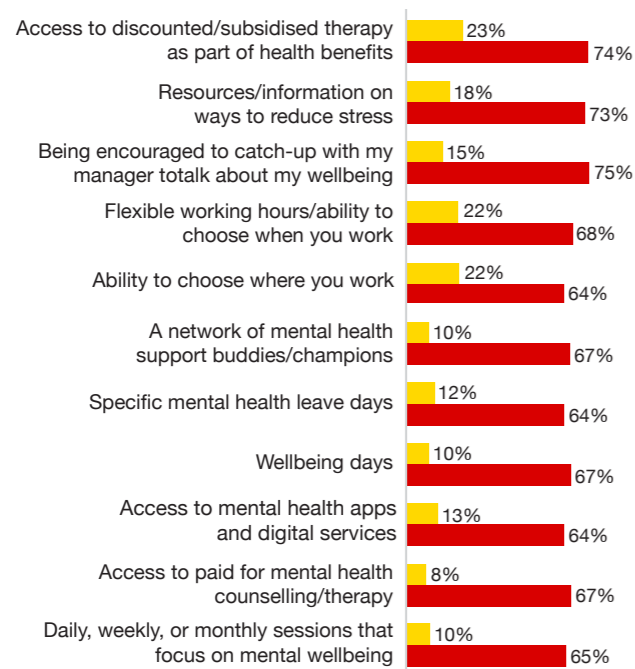
WHERE THE LEADER SPEAKS OUT:

- The view of whether "Employer cares about mental health" increases from **22% to 85%**
- Lack of interest, motivation or energy reduces from **51% to 34%**



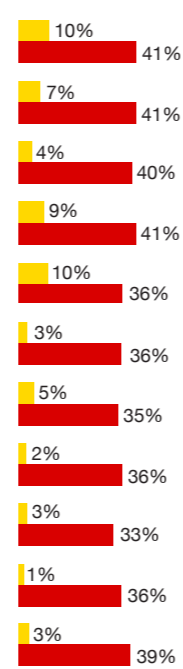
In organisations where the head of organisation speaks out, workers are more likely to report that support is available, and there is a greater tendency for that support to be used. For example, the provision of resources on ways to reduce stress rises from 18% to 73%, and the use of counselling or therapy support increases from 1% to 36%.

Types of support available



■ Head of organisation does not speak about mental health ■ Head of organisation does speak about mental health

Types of support used



SECTION 4.

TRUST AND PROXIMITY: THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF LINE MANAGERS

Besides the instrumental role that senior leaders can play in speaking about mental health, the personal behaviours and attitudes of those with line management responsibilities are likely to be a key factor in supporting people's wellbeing. Employees in China who consider their direct manager well-equipped to hold conversations about mental health report are three times less likely to have experienced any negative feeling at work (33% vs 11%).

Conversely, Chinese workers who feel their manager is not equipped to have supportive mental health conversations report worse experiences. Forty-nine percent felt a lack of interest, motivation or energy in the month preceding the survey (vs 32% in those whose manager is well equipped), 39% had negative thoughts (vs 22%) and 34% report being less productive (vs 27%).

Feelings at work



Managers who haven't had training report much lower levels of confidence in their ability to support people in their teams (39% vs 80% of those who have been trained). Similarly, only 35% of workers believe their manager is equipped to hold conversations that would help someone with mental health issues – significantly less than the global average of 48%, although 60% of people surveyed in China feel their manager would be supportive if they shared their mental health challenges with them, slightly below the global figure of 62%.

Despite this, many employers are under-investing in their managers' skills on mental health, with only 43% of managers having had training on mental health conversations (globally 41%). However, amongst those who have had training, 62% say this training is provided annually, much above the global average of 38%.

35%

OF MANAGERS ARE EQUIPPED FOR SUPPORTIVE CONVERSATIONS



43%

OF MANAGERS HAVE HAD TRAINING ON MENTAL HEALTH CONVERSATIONS



WHERE THE MANAGER IS WELL-EQUIPPED TO HAVE THOSE CONVERSATIONS:

FEELINGS OF LACK OF INTEREST, MOTIVATION OR ENERGY REDUCED FROM **49% TO 32%**

NEGATIVE THOUGHTS REDUCED FROM **39% TO 22%**

SECTION 5.

WORKPLACE SUPPORT: EXPECTATIONS VERSUS REALITY

72%

employees consider it important that workplace mental health is prioritised (globally 73%)



51%

perceive mental health to be a priority for their employer (globally 56%)



52%

say their employer provides mental health support (globally 53%)



59%

have not used specific mental health leave days but are willing to do so (globally 51%)



50%

have access to subsidised therapy (globally 39%)



23%

use catch ups with managers to talk about mental wellbeing (globally 27%)



Whether mental health issues stem from work-related causes or not, it is clear that workers look to their employers to provide support. In China, 72% of workers say it is important to them that their employer prioritises their mental health. However, only 51% perceive their employer to provide that support (globally 56%).

Under half of Chinese employees have access to most dedicated sources of support, and the support is generally only used by around half of those for whom they are available. Less than a quarter (23%) of Chinese employees take up the opportunity to discuss mental wellbeing during catch ups with their managers.

Types of support available

Types of support used

Not used but willing to

