

# MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE: THE GERMAN PICTURE



## SECTION 1. THE STATE OF WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH



### ISSUES EXPERIENCED IN THE PRIOR MONTH:



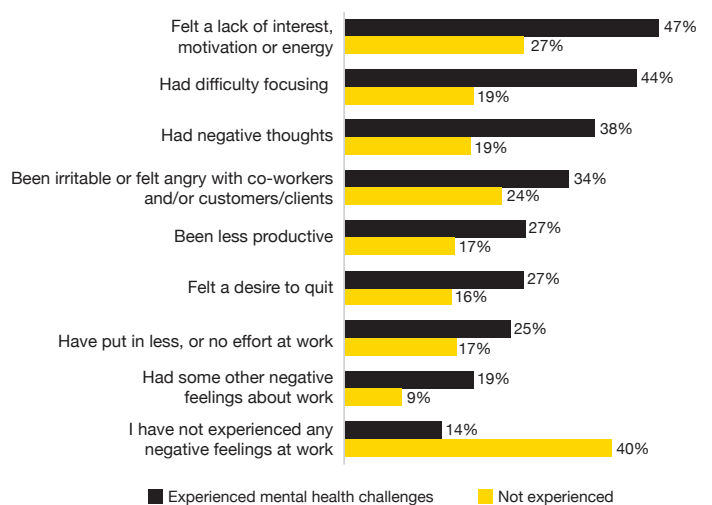
### FEELINGS AT WORK IN THE PRIOR MONTH:



At 41%, German workers' experience of mental health issues is lower than found globally, although the figure for blue collar employees, at 47%, is noticeably higher than the 38% for white collar employees. When asked whether they had felt negative emotions at work over the previous month, 86% of workers who have experienced mental health issues in Germany said they had felt one or more (compared to 60% of 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 27% amongst those not affected). Difficulty focusing came second (44% vs 19%). Twenty-seven percent considered their productivity was reduced (vs 17%), and the same proportion felt a desire to quit their job over the previous month (vs 16%) – showing the extent to which mental health can influence behaviours and mindsets in the workplace. For Gen-Z respondents, 43% said they had been less productive.

### Feelings at work



**Forty-seven percent of workers in Germany mention they experienced stress at work in the month before the survey – the highest-ranking issue of the seven issues measured.**



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. Forty-seven percent of workers in Germany mention they experienced stress at work in the month before the survey – the highest-ranking issue of the seven issues measured. The proportion of employees affected by work-related stress reaches 58% among Gen Zs, for whom it ranks first alongside concerns about money. A higher number of Gen Zs also experience difficulty focusing (50% vs 30% for Germany as a whole), negative thoughts (50% vs 27%) and loss of productivity (43% vs 21%). One-third of employees in Germany also mention concerns about their own health.

In considering the impact of work aspects on mental health, more German employees indicate that workload undermines (39%) rather than supports (13%) their mental health - a significantly greater difference than is seen globally. In general, German employees are less positive about the impact of work aspects on mental health, for example only 18% consider culture is supportive to mental health, compared with 36% globally (whereas 18% consider culture to undermine mental health, both in Germany and globally).

## **SECTION 2.** **STIGMA AND THE BARRIERS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AT WORK**

In Germany, stigma is still holding people back from sharing mental health issues at work: less than a third of respondents (31%, significantly lower than the global average of 45%) feel that people would not be adversely impacted if they shared their thoughts and emotions in their place of work.

Twenty-six percent of German respondents overall feel there is stigma in their workplace around mental health (37% globally). In those workplaces, 41% of those affected by mental health challenges say they have felt stigma personally as a result of those issues (with the global proportion being 57%).

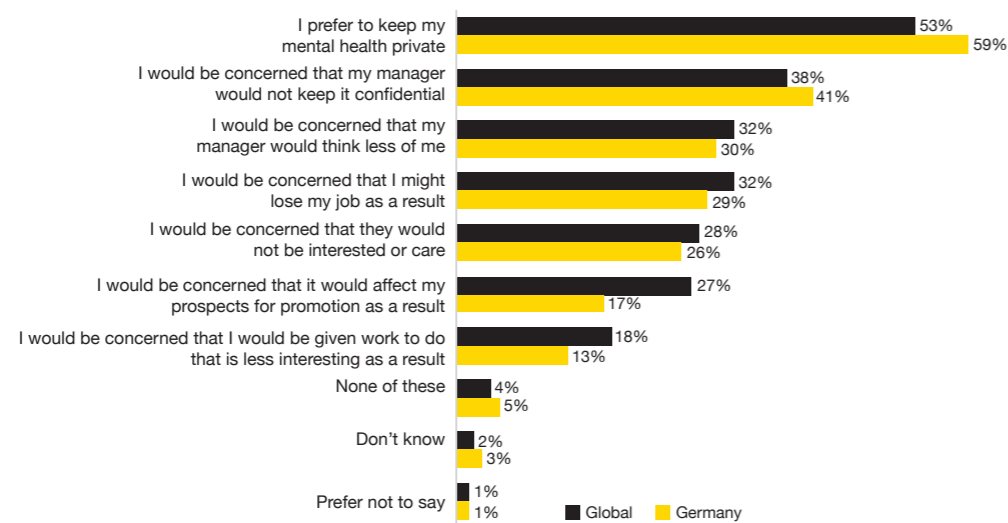
Among those experiencing mental health challenges in Germany, only 38% have told their managers about their issues, significantly lower than the global figure of 53%. Forty percent of those who have shared their issues have been discriminated against as a result. Whilst troubling, this is lower than the global figure of 50%, but the proportion is markedly higher in under-represented groups (63% neurodivergent and 50% with a disability).

Workers in Germany seem less willing to share mental health issues with their colleagues: only 41% say they would tell their line manager if they encountered mental health challenges (versus a global average of 56%) and 50% would be comfortable disclosing them as the reason for taking time off (vs 61% globally).



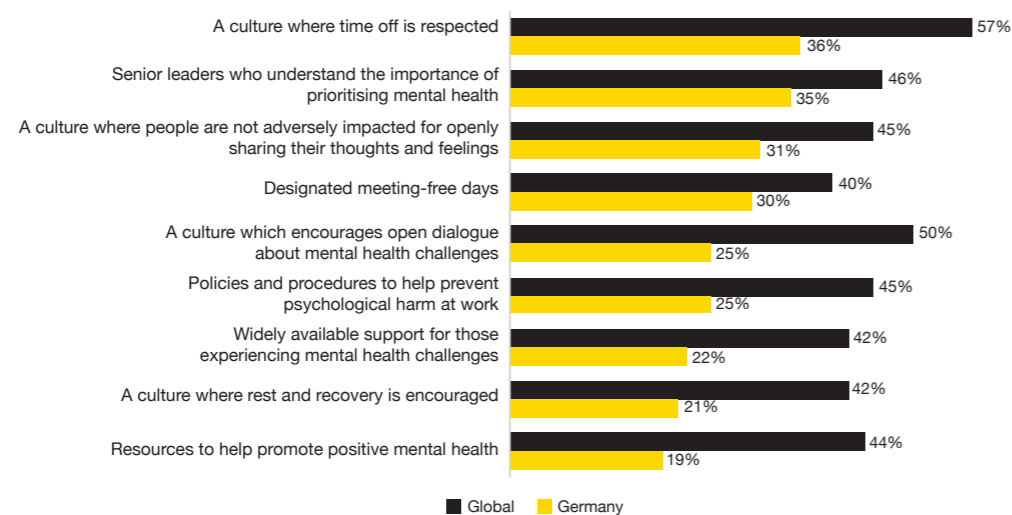
The most common reason cited by respondents for not telling their manager about needing to take time off work due to mental health challenges is a preference for privacy, with almost three in five respondents (59%) agreeing with this statement – higher than the global average of 53%. But other reasons point to stigma: for example, around two in five (41%) stated that they felt concerned that their manager would not keep this confidential. Female workers are even more concerned – 66% preferring to keep mental health private (compared with 52% of men) and 48% lack of confidentiality (34% of men). Notably, 50% of Gen Zs are concerned that their manager would think less of them (against 30% overall).

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



In all respects, responses for Germany suggest a significantly less positive workplace environment for mental health than globally. For example, only 25% consider the workplace to present a culture where rest and recovery is encouraged, compared with 50% globally, and just 19% that there were resources to help promote positive mental health (44% globally).

### Workplace culture and policies that are in place



## SECTION 3. SETTING THE TONE: THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF LEADERSHIP ON MENTAL HEALTH

German employees place a lower importance on employers prioritising mental health than seen globally, but 60% of workers still feel that it's extremely or very important for employers to look after the mental health of their workforce (by comparison with 73% globally). Only 45% believe that their employer cares about their mental health (57% globally) and 35% that they have senior leaders who understand the importance of prioritising mental health (globally 46%). When asked whether the head of their organisation talks about mental health just two in ten workers in Germany (19%) answer positively, significantly lower than the global average (40%).

Within organisations where leaders do not vocally address mental health, 48% of respondents think they should. While this number is lower than the global average (59%), it does indicate the importance that workers in Germany attach to their senior leaders showing visible ownership when it comes to supporting mental wellbeing.

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, 77% of workers feel their organisation cares about their mental wellbeing, whereas only 34% 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, 67% of people are willing to disclose their issues to their managers, compared to 31% where they don't, and 71% would tell their manager that they are taking time off due to mental health challenges, compared with 44% where heads of organisations do not speak on the topic.



**19%**

Heads of organisations speak out (globally 40%)



**48%**

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 their "Employer cares about mental health" increases from **34% to 77%**
- Workers' desire to quit reduces from **24% to 17%**



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 desire to quit (24% vs 17%). 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, provision of wellbeing days rises from 11% to 49%, and their use increases from 5% to 24%.

## 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. The impact on the desire of employees in Germany to quit was greater when they considered their direct manager well-equipped to hold conversations than when they have a senior leader who speaks about mental health.

Conversely, workers who feel their manager is not equipped to have supportive mental health conversations report markedly worse experiences. Forty-six percent felt low levels of interest, motivation or energy in the month preceding the survey (vs 28% in those whose manager is well-equipped), 37% had negative thoughts (vs 22%) and 29% report having felt a desire to quit (vs 14%).

### Feelings at work

**43%**

OF MANAGERS ARE EQUIPPED FOR SUPPORTIVE CONVERSATIONS



(GLOBALLY 48%)

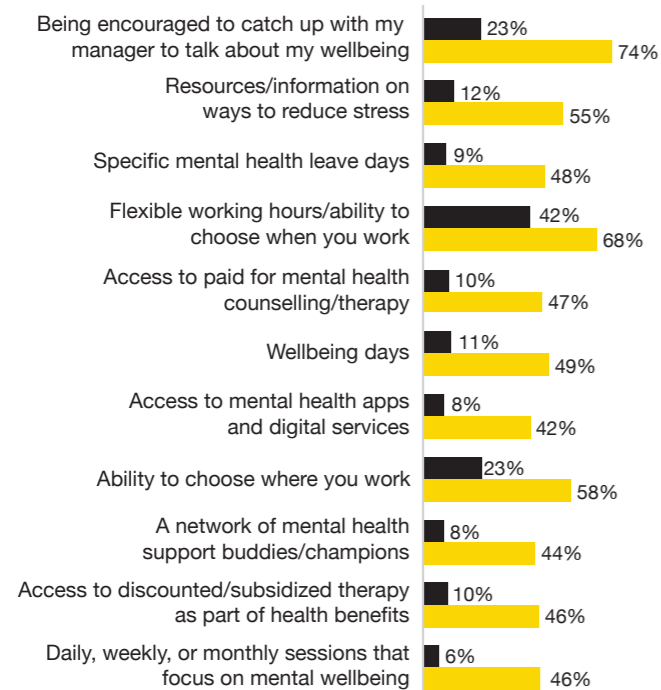
**17%**

OF MANAGERS HAVE HAD TRAINING ON MENTAL HEALTH CONVERSATIONS



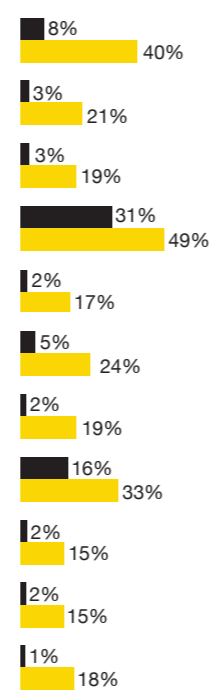
(GLOBALLY 41%)

### Types of support available

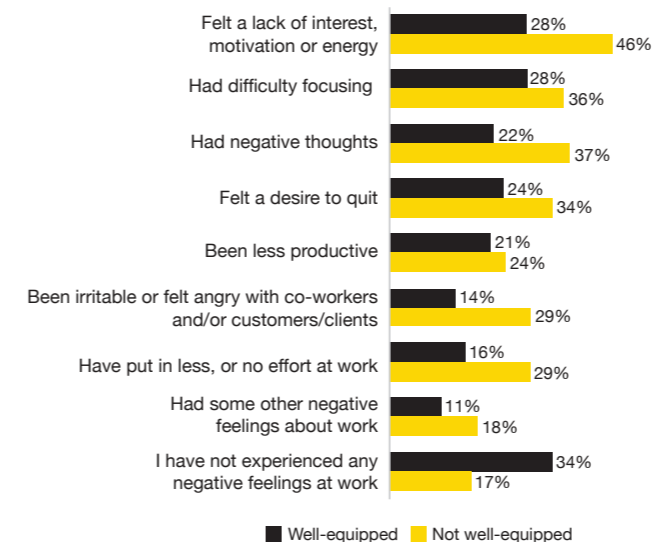


■ Head of organisation does not speak about mental health ■ Head of organisation does speak about mental health

### Types of support used



### Feelings at work



■ Well-equipped ■ Not well-equipped

Extent manager is equipped to have supportive conversations on mental health

Managers who haven't had training on mental health conversations report lower levels of confidence in their ability to support people in their teams (65% vs 82% of those who have been trained). Similarly, only 43% believe their manager is equipped to hold conversations that would help someone with mental health issues (vs 48% globally), although 58% of workers overall 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 17% of managers having had training, well below the global average of 41%. Even amongst those managers who have had training, 34% say this training was a 'one-off' (42% globally).

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



FEELINGS OF LACK OF INTEREST, MOTIVATION OR ENERGY REDUCED FROM

**46% TO 28%**



DESIRE TO QUIT REDUCED FROM

**29% TO 14%**

## SECTION 5.

### WORKPLACE SUPPORT: EXPECTATIONS VERSUS REALITY

**60%**

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



**53%**

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



**34%**

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



**11%**

have access to specific mental health leave days (globally 42%)



**54%**

have not used wellbeing days but are willing to do so (globally 51%)



**6%**

take up regular sessions that focus on mental health (globally 19%)



Whether mental health issues stem from work-related causes or not, it is clear that many workers look to their employers to provide support. When asked about what can make the most positive impact on them personally at work, 40% of people mention employers looking after their mental health. It ranks behind ensuring effective management of home and work lives (43%), and just ahead of providing a safe working environment and ensuring the physical health of employee is looked after (37%), all of which are also conducive to mental wellbeing.

However, in Germany only 34% of workers agree that their employer provides mental health support for staff, and specific types of support are provided less than seen globally. Even where support is provided, German employees are less likely to have utilised the support available to them than globally, with take-up by less than half of those for whom they are available.

#### Types of support available

#### Types of support used

#### Not used but willing to

