



**MENTAL
HEALTH IN THE
WORKPLACE:**
a global picture



THE GLOBAL BUSINESS COLLABORATION
for Better Workplace Mental Health

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Poppy Jaman

Chair of the Global Business Collaboration and Founder and Vice Chair of MindForward Alliance

FOREWORD

The Global Business Collaboration for Better Workplace Mental Health (GBC) was launched at Davos in 2021. Since then, it has rallied hundreds of business leaders around a public commitment to foster mentally healthy environments for their employees.

We created the GBC in recognition of the crucial part that business has to play in shaping today's world – and indeed tomorrow's. As we start to better understand the prevalence and impact of poor mental health, and with work being such a key component of our daily lives and identities, employers are faced with a key responsibility: not just to provide the meaningful work and livelihood essential to wellbeing, but also to build environments that will enable future generations of workers to thrive in an increasingly uncertain world.

More and more business leaders understand this, and this is reflected in the momentum that has quickly built around the GBC. In three years, the collaboration has engaged nearly 200 companies spanning 20 industries and 62 countries across six continents, with their most senior leaders signing its Leadership Pledge and committing their organisations to making workplace mental health a priority.

Through the Pledge, our work is reaching some three million employees and family members, many of them in Global South countries where workplace mental health is quickly rising up the corporate agenda. We have supported over 700 businesses with both practical tools and nuanced market insights garnered from the regional leadership round tables we held in Singapore, India and France in 2023. With this

support, companies of all sizes have been enabled to take tangible steps in supporting employee mental health.

The business leaders we work with across the world are asking crucial questions. How can we better understand the specific needs and perspectives of different generations and cultures? What helps build trust and remove stigma? How can people be empowered to seek help at work? What support is most effective and how can we encourage its use? How can we make sure we understand cultural nuances and avoid promoting a singular approach to workplace mental health?

In delivering the GBC's programme of activity, it became clear to us that, despite the interactions of work and mental health being increasingly well-researched and articulated, more in-depth and actionable insights were needed to fully answer these questions.

This is why we decided to commission this ground-breaking research. Conducted across 12 markets representative of the global workplace, it provides the detailed insights that all business leaders responsible for people – be they CEOs, CFOs, HR Directors or ESG leaders – need to design sustainable strategies that support good mental health for all employees, wherever they may be in the world.

Business environments have huge potential in helping people stay well or recover, creating societal benefits well beyond productivity, profit or growth. Meanwhile, business is facing dramatic changes, and forward-thinking leaders are required to continuously reinvent business models to remain ahead of the curve. To do

this, they need to offer workers the conditions and support that empower them to be at their best and embrace change.

We know from the efforts and experiences of the business leaders we work with that the benefits of prioritising employee mental health are real. Their courageous leadership shows that ideas that may once have seemed improbable or even counter-intuitive for business can translate into accepted interventions that make measurably positive impacts. I invite you to use this report to visualise the future global ecosystem that you want your business to operate in. Use the data to inspire action and to keep mental health and wellbeing on the boardroom agenda. Creating mentally healthy workplace cultures is an incredible challenge but also a generational opportunity. My sincere hope is that the work of the GBC over the last three years, including the insights provided in this report, takes us closer to seizing this opportunity.

Finally, I would like to thank United for Global Mental Health for incubating the Global Business Collaboration in 2021, the Founding Partners for having the foresight to create this ambitious movement, and MindForward Alliance for delivering this ground-breaking programme for the last two years, and for taking the Pledge and the mission of the GBC forward. In doing so, MindForward Alliance will continue to support and grow the global community of visionary leaders and businesses to prioritise action on workplace mental health.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL BUSINESS COLLABORATION FOR BETTER WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH

No one business has all the answers when it comes to workplace mental health. This is why the **Global Business Collaboration for Better Workplace Mental Health** was established in 2021 to catalyse action on workplace mental health on a global scale.

Founded by nine multinationals - BP, BHP, Clifford Chance, Deloitte, HSBC, Sodexo, Unilever, Visa and WPP - the GBC has seen almost 200 companies sign its Leadership Pledge over the campaign's three-year span, providing a tangible way for forward-looking organisations to join the global movement for mental health. Overall, the collaboration is reaching some three million people, and supporting over 700 businesses globally in taking tangible steps on workplace mental health.

The campaign's culmination is the publication of this landmark research, which provides much-needed insight and evidence on workplace mental health globally, the experiences of employees, as well as solutions and next steps for business leaders and employers.

The GBC's legacy is the creation of a global community of visionary business leaders who are willing to commit to prioritising workplace mental health in their own organisations, and to sharing learnings, insights and good practice to support positive action – wherever a global business is on its journey.

The campaign and Leadership Pledge will now be taken forward by **MindForward Alliance**, the GBC's delivery partner for the last two years. **MindForward Alliance** is the leading global not-for-profit organisation transforming workplace culture into one that supports the mental health of its employees. For over a decade, its community of businesses has been leading the way in creating transformational change in workplace mental health.



KEY FINDINGS WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH IN NUMBERS

52%

of workers say they have experienced stress at work in the month prior to the survey.



85%

of people working in an organisation where the most senior leader speaks about mental health feel their employer cares about their mental wellbeing.

This number falls to 31% in companies where leaders do not speak about mental health.



41%

of line managers have had dedicated training on having conversations with colleagues about their mental health – yet their ability to hold supportive conversations is shown to have a significant impact on people's experience of work.



47%

of workers say their employer has put in place helpful measures dedicated to supporting staff with their mental health at work.

And for many of the dedicated measures available, only about half of people use them.



52%

of the employed population have experienced or are experiencing mental health challenges. Among those, half report feeling a lack of interest, motivation or energy at work.

A third share having been less productive, or have considered leaving their current job.



73%

of workers feel that it's extremely or very important for employers to prioritise the mental health of their workforce.

56%

believe that supporting employee mental health is currently a high priority for their employer.



42%

of workers agree that their workplace has a culture which encourages open dialogue about mental health.



47%

of those who have shared their mental health challenges with their line manager say they have been discriminated against as a result.

A third of workers who say they don't feel comfortable sharing mental health challenges with their line managers say it is because they would be concerned about losing their job as a result.



THE STATE OF WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH

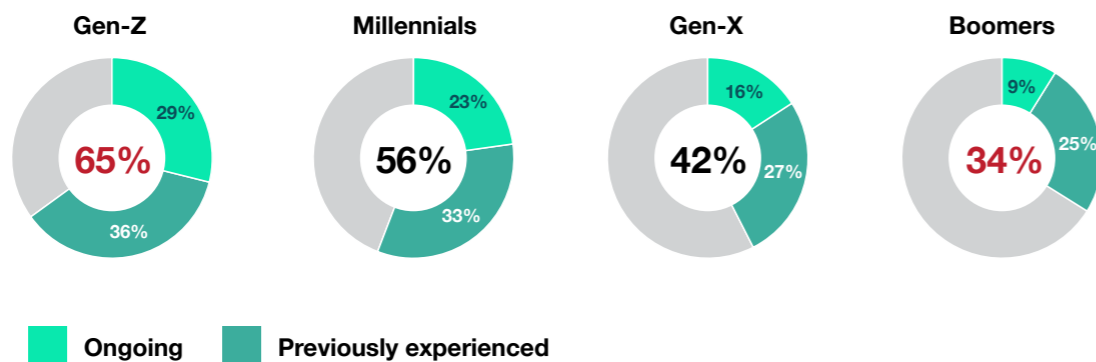
Given the place that work holds in people’s lives, it is crucial to understand the interactions between mental health, experiences of work and attitudes to work. As awareness around the importance of mental wellbeing increases, so does the need for employers to understand and address the impacts that mental health issues have on work outcomes on one hand, and how work-related factors may improve or undermine mental health on the other. This research shows that poor mental health affects all parts of the workforce, with work-specific causes and effects that employers need to address.

MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES ARE PREVALENT IN THE WORKING POPULATION, ESPECIALLY IN YOUNGER AND UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS

Around half of workers overall (52%) say they are experiencing, or have experienced, mental health challenges. These are commonly experienced in all sections of the workforce, but with some notable differences across demographics.

Looking across the spectrum of workplace generations, the proportion of Gen Z workers saying they have experienced mental health challenges (65%) is twice as high as that of Boomers (34%).

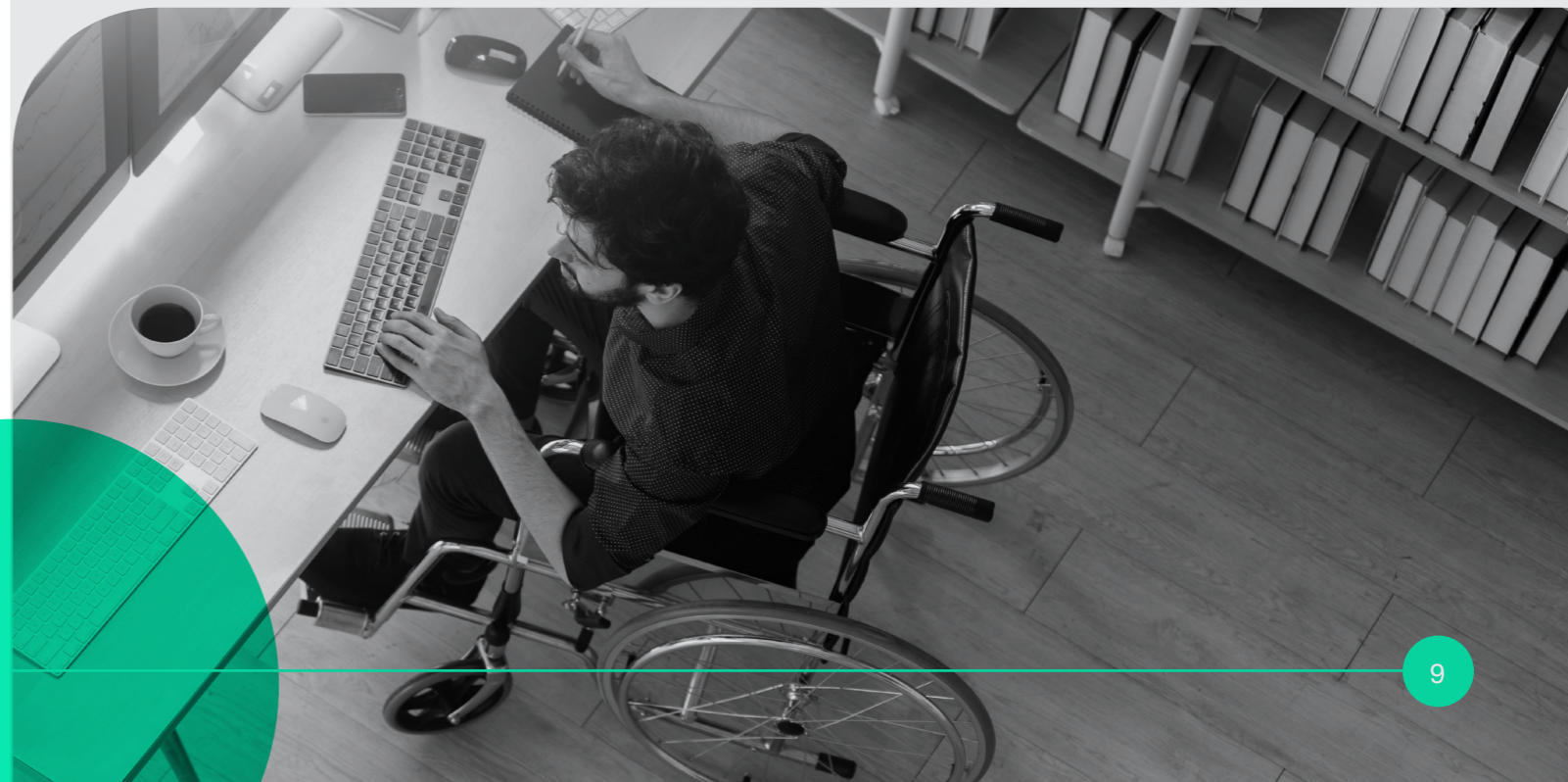
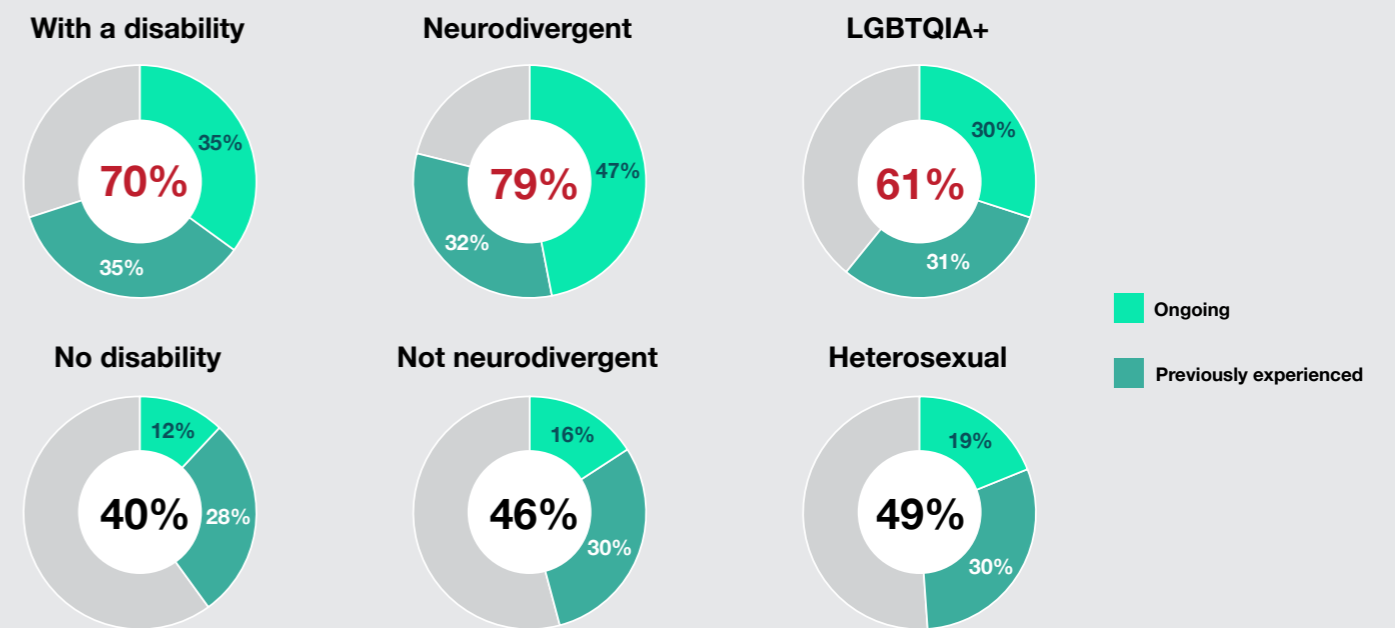
Experience of mental health challenges



Percentages do not necessarily add to 100% due to rounding

Mental health issues also disproportionately impact workers from under-represented groups – most notably neurodivergent people (79%), those with a disability (70%) and those identifying as LGBTQIA+ (61%).

Experience of mental health challenges



MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES DIRECTLY IMPACT PEOPLE'S WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE AND PRODUCTIVITY

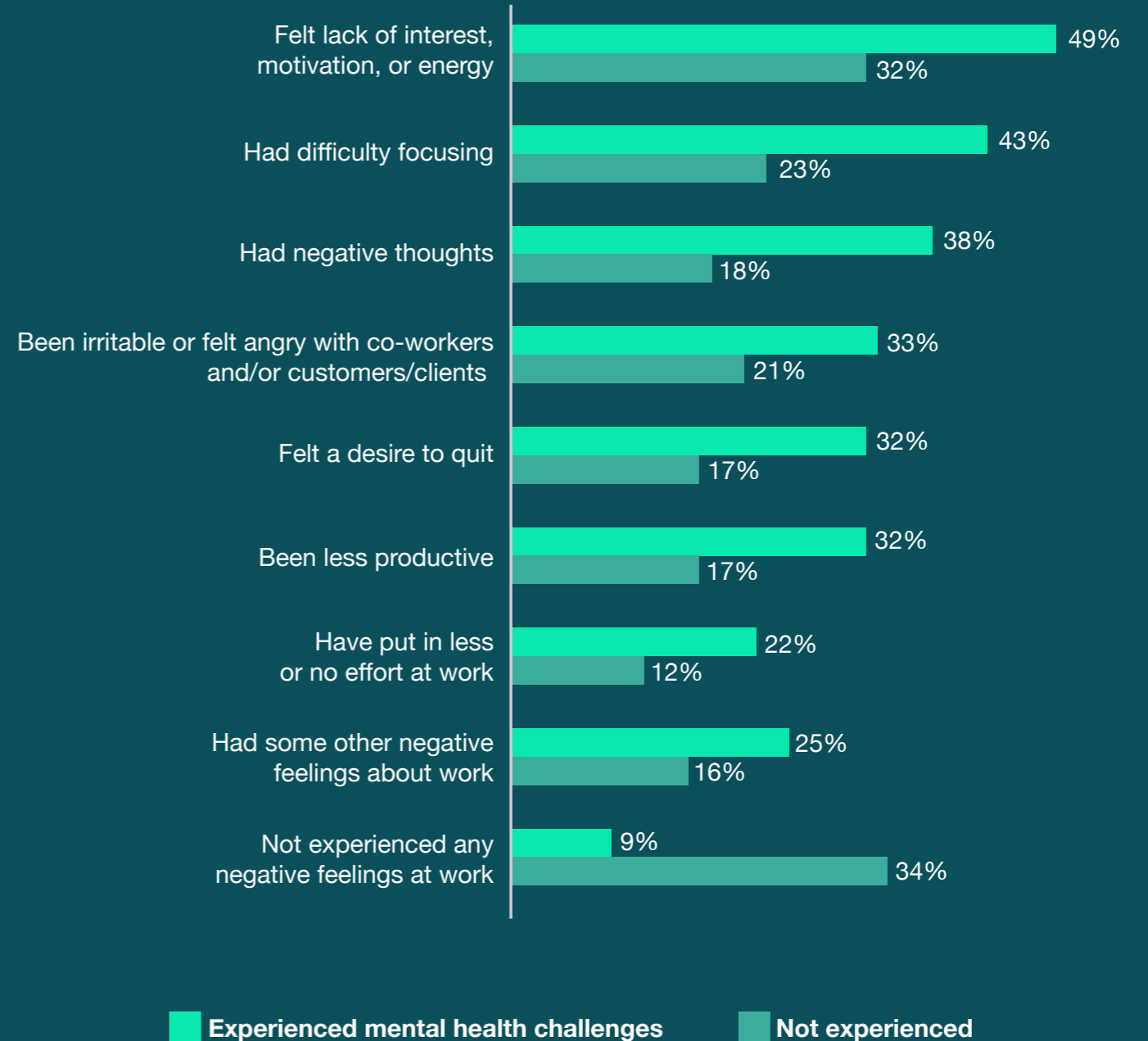
Employees affected by mental health challenges are more likely to have negative experiences at work, negatively impacting their performance and attitudes to others.

When asked whether they had felt negative emotions at work over the previous month, nine out of ten of those who have experienced mental health issues said they had felt one or more (compared to 66% of employees not affected by mental health challenges).

A lack of interest, motivation or energy – symptoms often associated with burnout – was the most commonly experienced by those affected by mental health challenges (49% vs 32% among those not affected). Difficulty focusing came second (43% vs 23%).

Worryingly, a third considered their productivity was reduced (32% vs 17%), have felt a desire to quit their job over the previous month (32% vs 17%), or felt angry or irritable towards co-workers or clients (33% vs 21%) – showing the extent to which mental health can influence behaviours and mindsets in the workplace.

Feelings at work

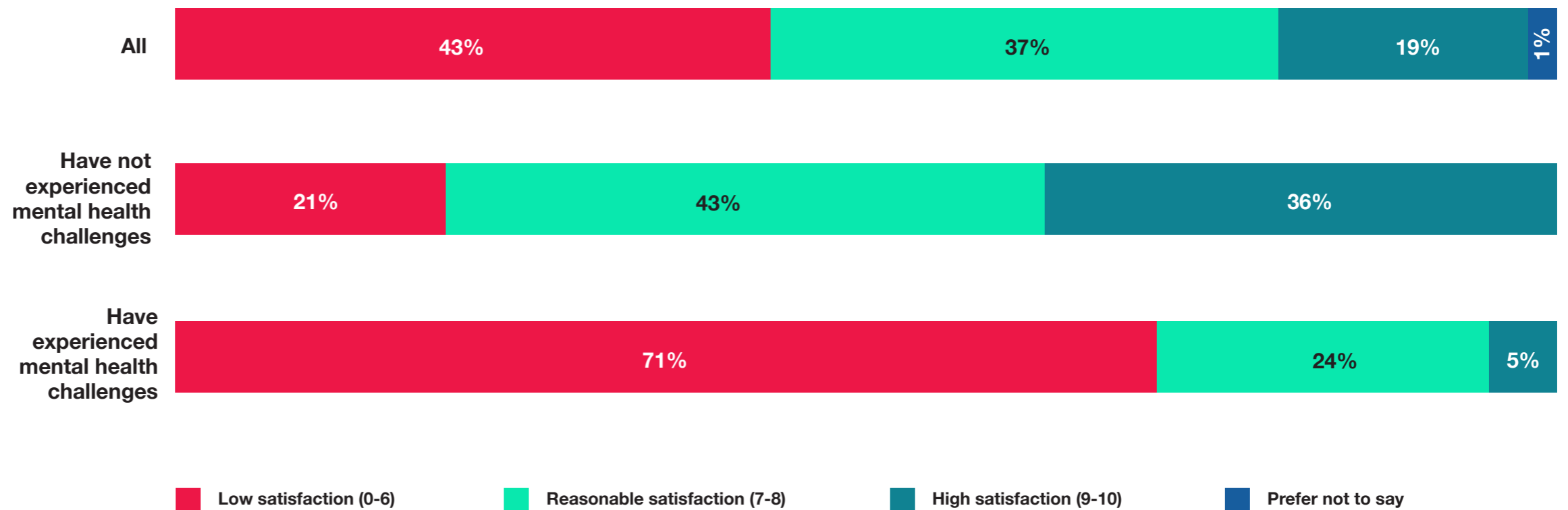




While the proportions of white-collar and blue-collar workers experiencing mental health challenges are similar (52% and 50% respectively), white-collar employees are more likely to have felt a lack of interest or energy (43% vs 38%) or experienced difficulty focusing (35% vs 30%). Blue-collar workers on the other hand are more likely to have felt a desire to quit (27% vs 24%).

Unsurprisingly, mental health issues also impact people's lives beyond work: over 70% of people who are experiencing, or have experienced, mental health challenges rate their life satisfaction as 0 to 6 out of 10 – more than twice the proportion of those who rate their mental health as good or excellent.

Satisfaction with life

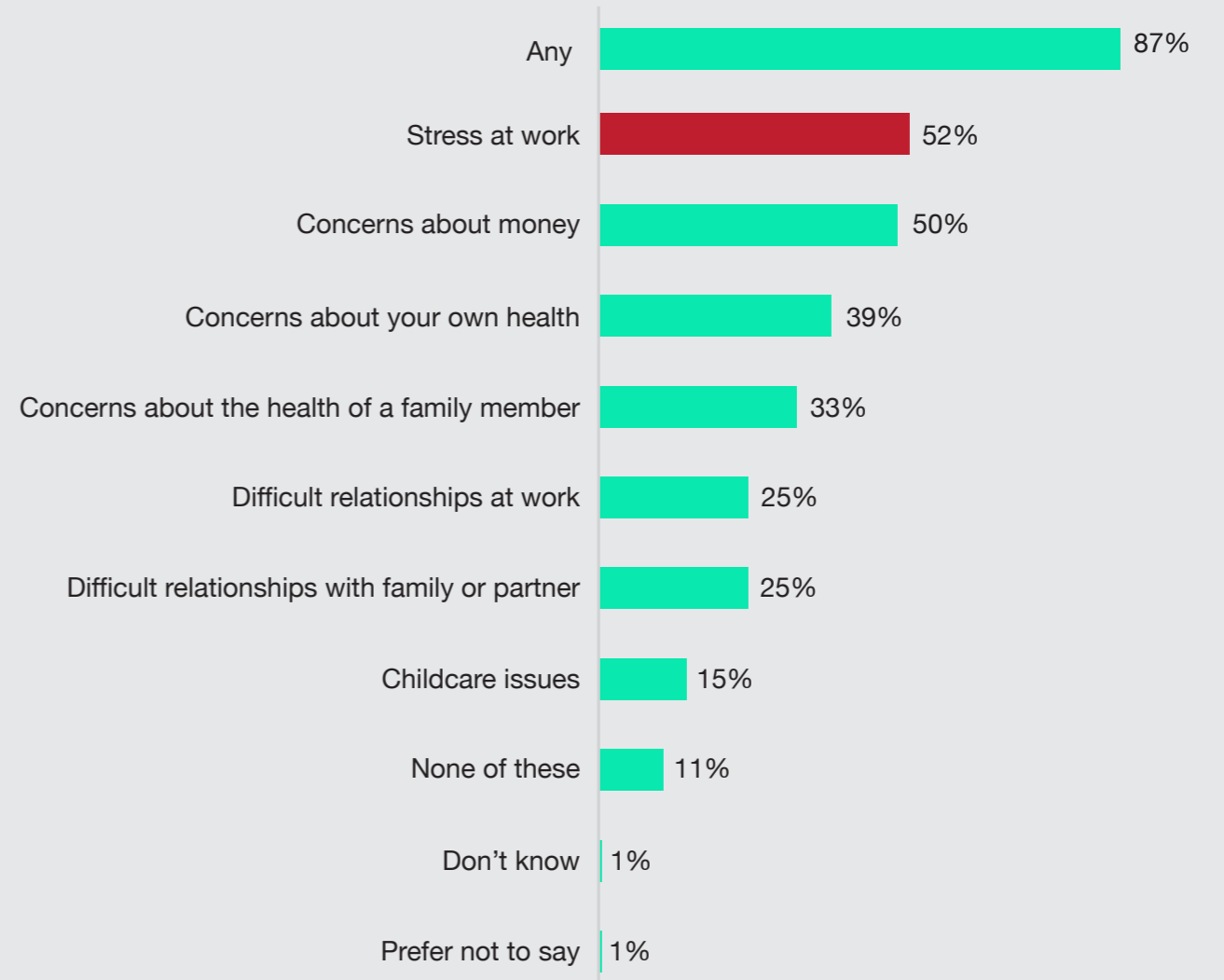


WORK ITSELF IS A POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTOR TO MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

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. Just over half (52%) of people mention that they had felt stress at work in the month before the survey – the highest-ranking issues of those measured – slightly ahead of concerns about money.

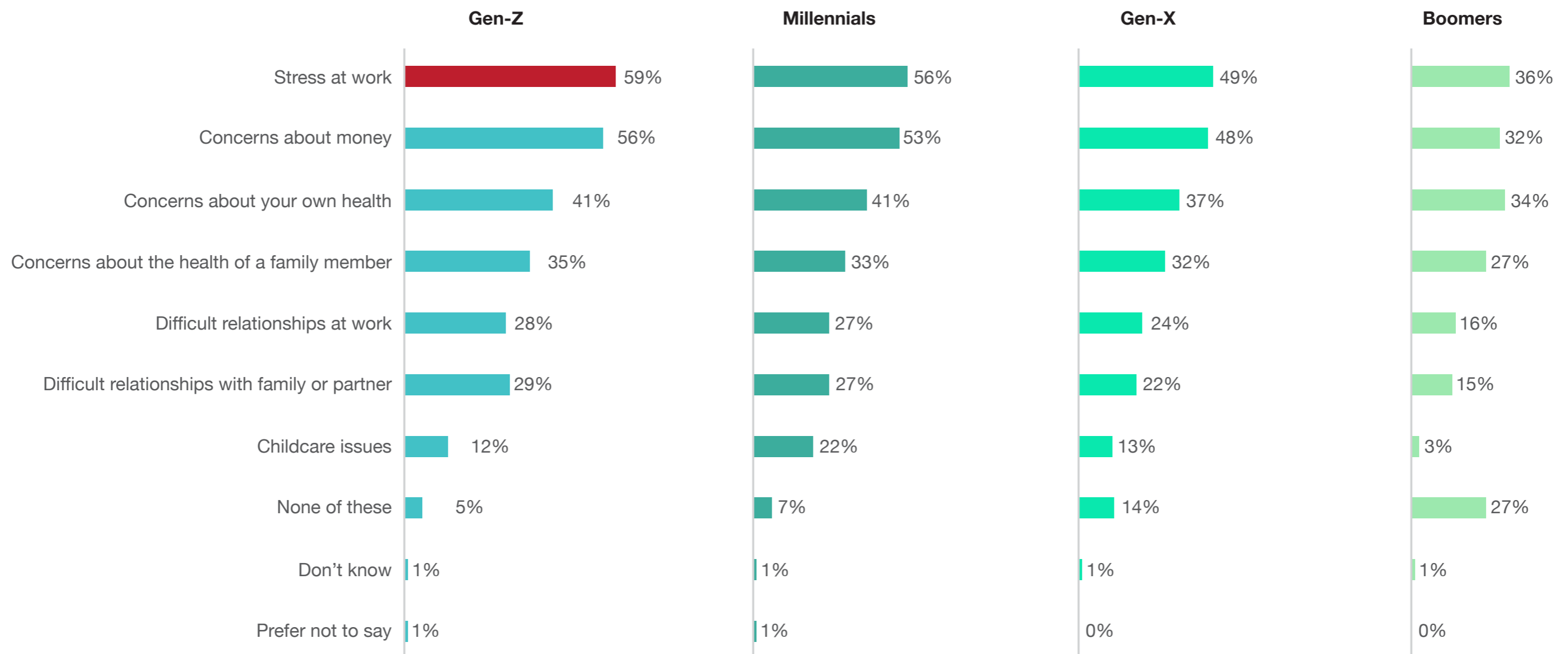


Issues experienced in month prior to survey



The proportion of employees affected by work-related stress reaches 59% among Gen Zs, and 57% in those living with a disability. A quarter of workers also mention experiencing difficult relationships at work.

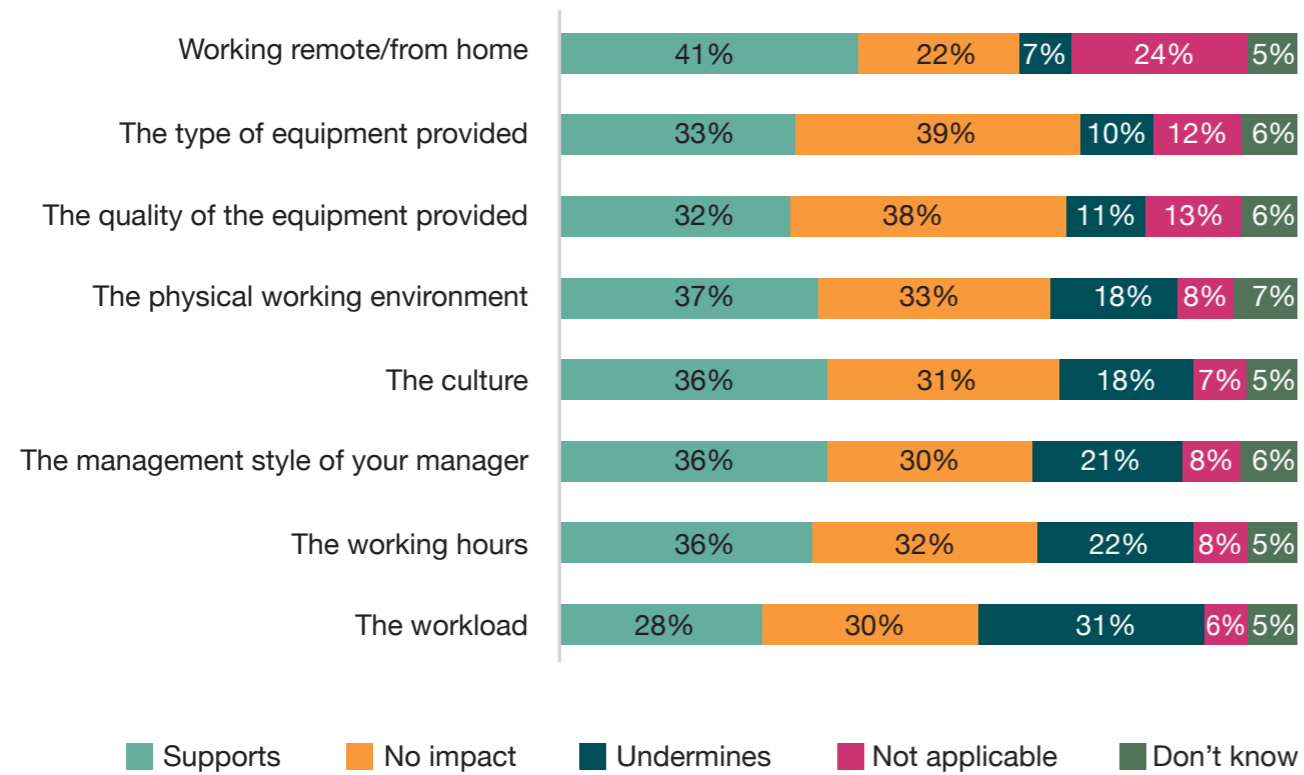
Issues experienced in past month



Meanwhile, three in ten respondents say their workload directly undermines their mental health, while 22% cite their working hours as a factor, and 21% the style of their managers.

By illustrating the impact that work, and working relationships, can have on a person's mental health, these numbers underline the responsibility of employers to provide the conditions and cultures that support, rather than impede, their employees' mental wellbeing.

Impact of work aspects on mental health



STIGMA AND THE BARRIERS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AT WORK

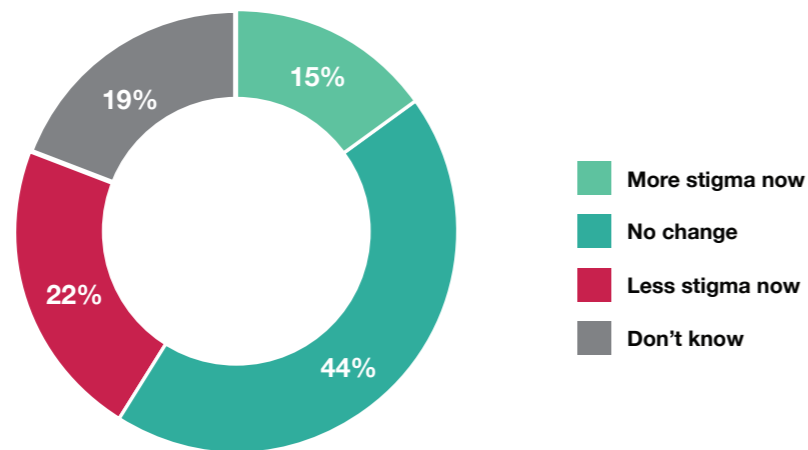
The prevalence of mental health challenges and their impact on working lives point to the importance of people feeling able to share their challenges at work without fear of negative consequences – a concept commonly referred to as ‘psychological safety’. Unfortunately, the data shows that stigma in the workplace around mental health persists, which either stops people from opening up about issues and seeking help, or causes them to feel discriminated against when they do.

STIGMA IS STILL HOLDING PEOPLE BACK FROM SHARING MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES AT WORK

A quarter (27%) of those experiencing mental health challenges currently or in the past say they have personally felt stigma from colleagues as a result of these issues, and over a third of respondents overall feel there is stigma in their workplace around mental health. These are striking numbers, especially when considering the spotlight that the COVID-19 pandemic has put on the importance of mental wellbeing in recent years.

In fact, the perception among workers is that there has only been a marginal improvement in attitudes to mental health since the pandemic: 22% feel there is less stigma in their workplace now than before the pandemic, with 15% saying the opposite. Over four in ten (44%) of people feel there has not been any change.

Change in stigma in the workplace since pandemic

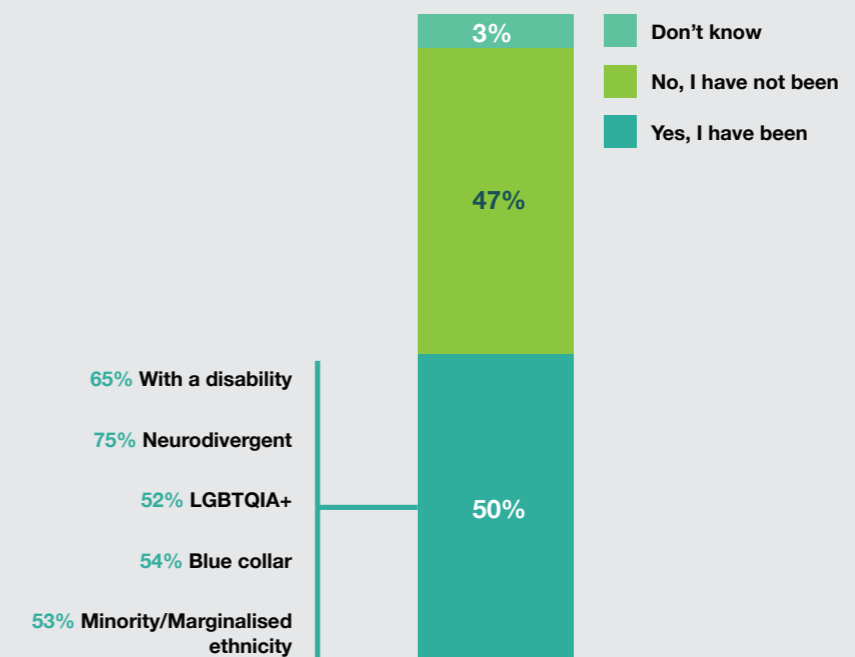


This stigma is in turn reflected in people’s attitudes to sharing issues and asking for help. Among those affected by mental health challenges, just over half (53%) have told their managers about their issues, and half of those say they have been discriminated against as a result – with the proportion being markedly higher in some under-represented groups (75% neurodivergent, 65% with a disability).

A little over half of those who have experienced mental health challenges indicate these have led them to take time off, with 69% of them reporting that they have felt stigma from others for having done so.

Whether they have experienced mental health challenges or not, people’s inclination is not to share issues with colleagues. Out of all respondents, only 56% say they would tell their line manager if they were affected by mental health challenges and 30% would choose not to disclose them as the reason for taking time off.

Been discriminated against as a result of telling manager about mental health issues



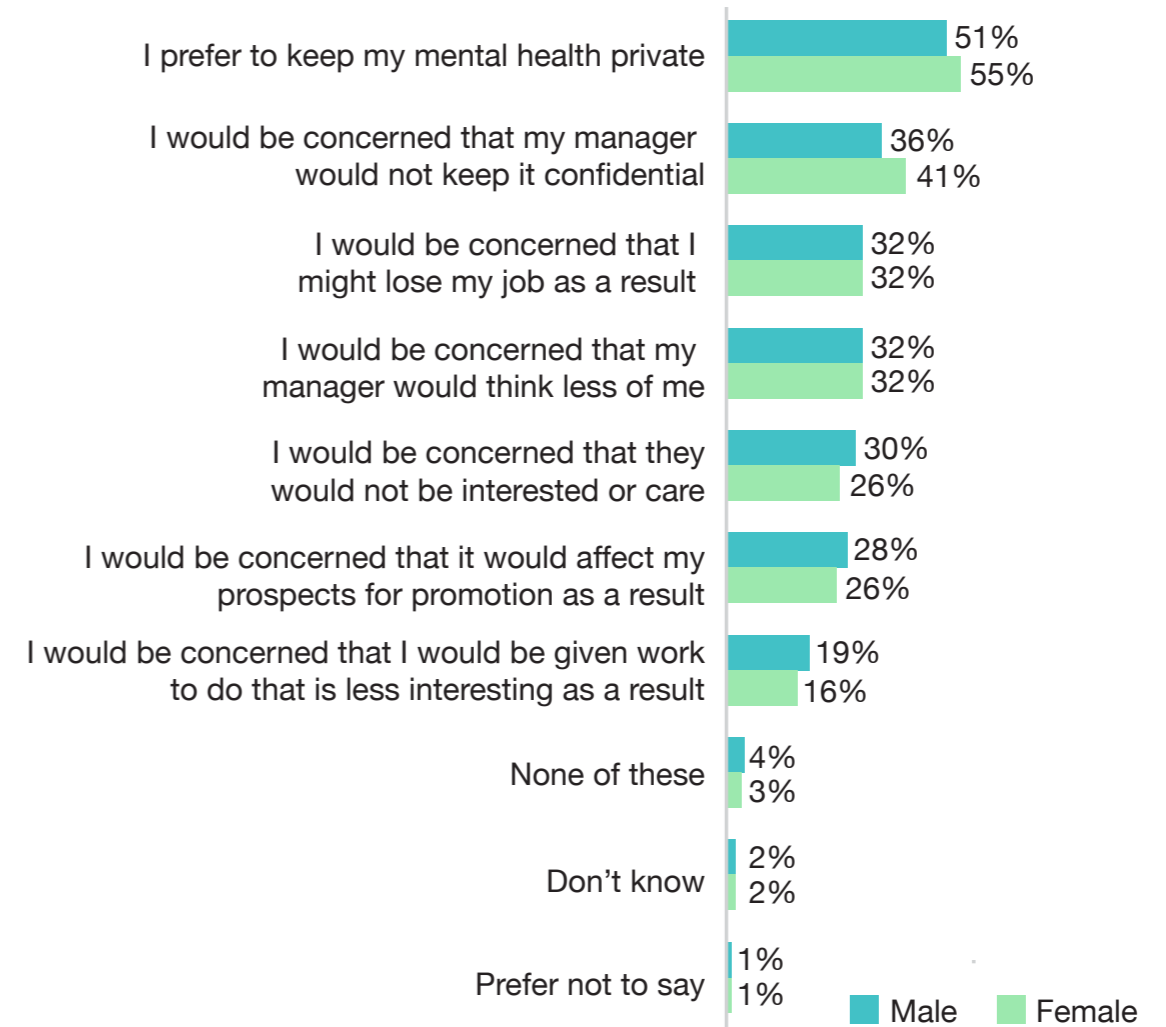
THERE IS A RANGE OF PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

These findings paint a disappointing picture of workers feeling a general lack of trust in their colleagues' ability to understand and support mental health issues. When looking at the reasons people cite for not disclosing mental health challenges as the reason for taking time off, most mention a preference for privacy, although several others point to a fear of judgment or career penalty. Nearly four in ten (38%) workers cite concerns about confidentiality, and a third say they would fear losing their job.

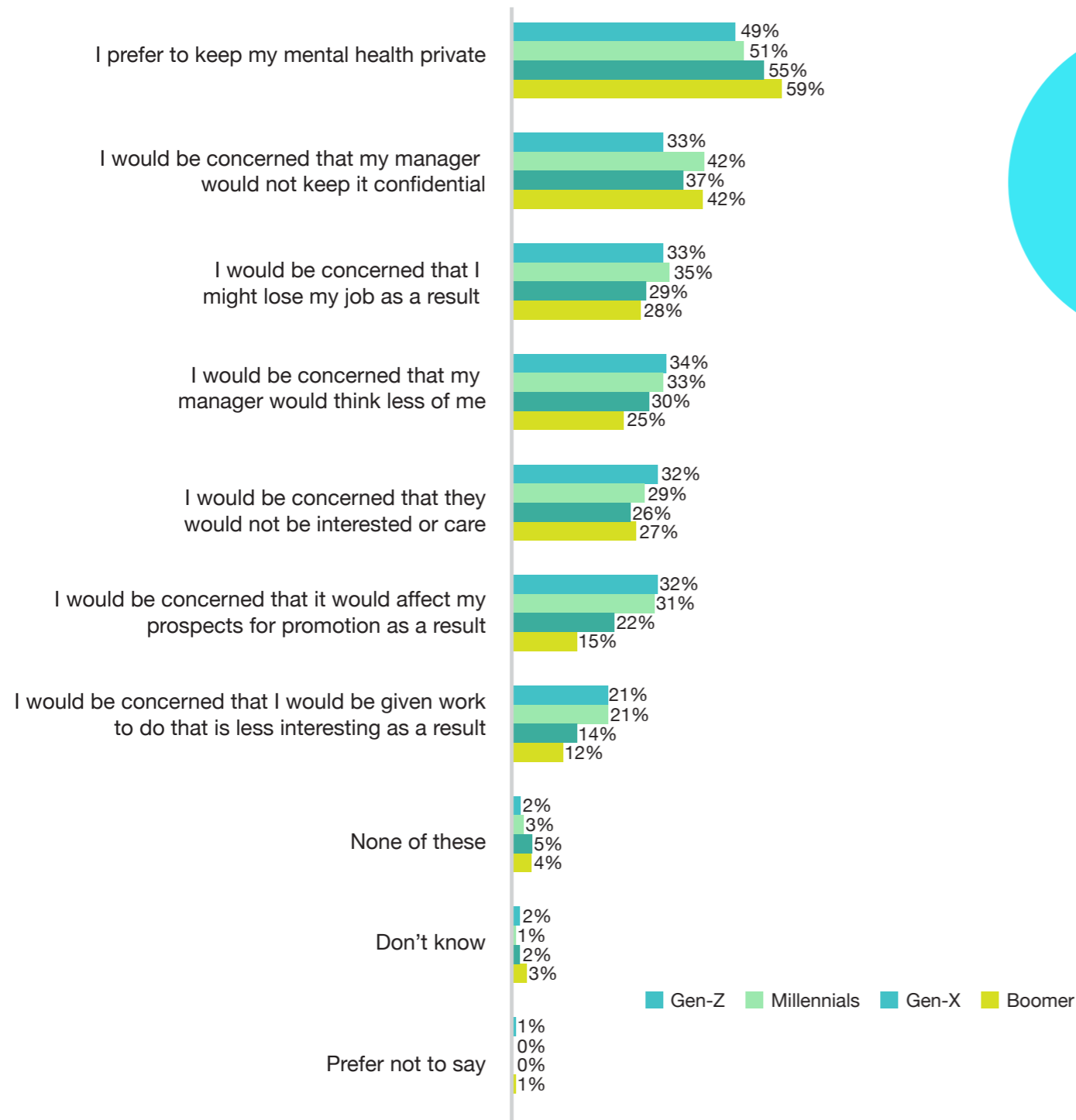
Women are more likely than men to say they would keep mental health challenges private (55% vs 51%) and to have concerns about their line manager keeping any disclosed issues confidential (41% vs 36%).



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

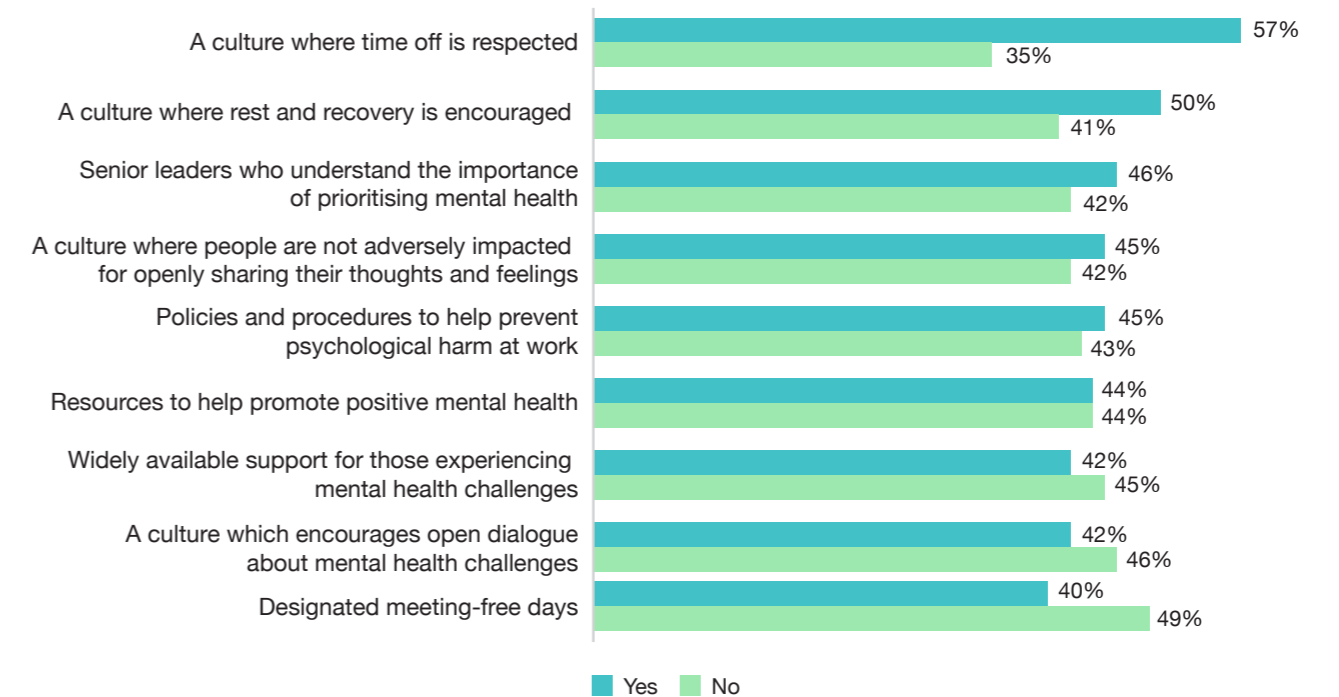


There are some noticeable differences between workplace generations too: a preference for privacy is more commonly observed in Boomers (59% vs 49% in Gen Zs) as the motivation for withholding mental health issues, whereas millennial and Gen Z workers are more likely to be concerned about judgement or penalty, such as losing their jobs, being overlooked for promotion, or being given less interesting work.



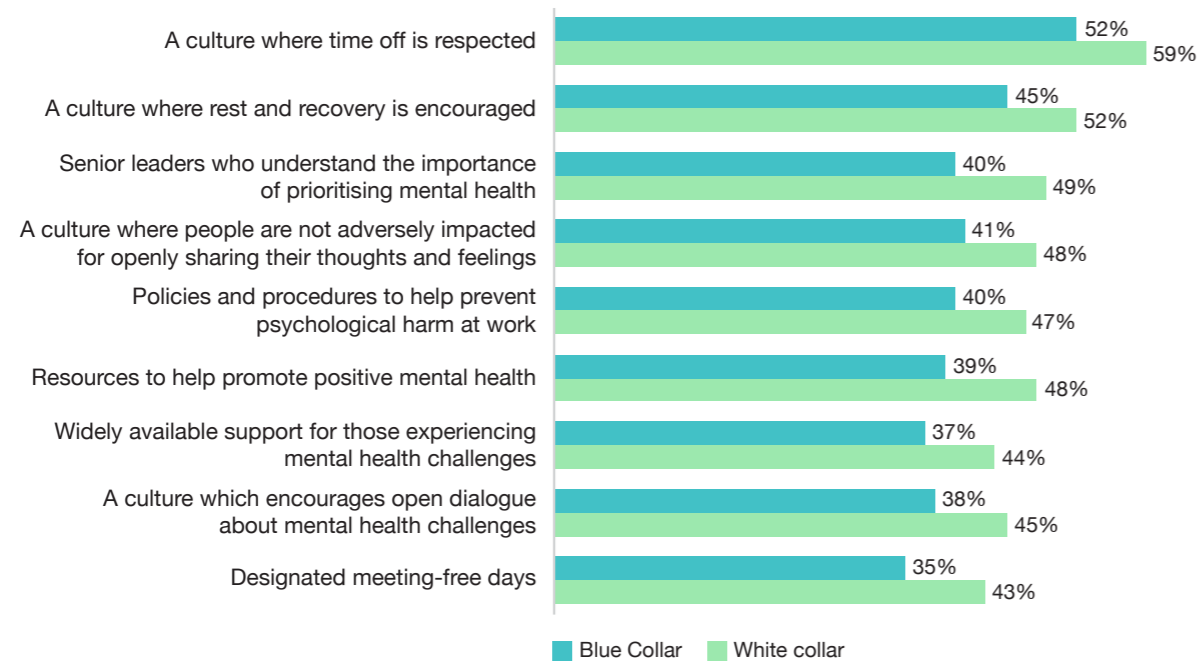
Crucially, several indicators in the research underline the importance of workplace cultures in creating, or undermining, psychological safety. When asked whether their workplace encourages open dialogue about mental health, more employees say “no” than “yes” (46% vs 42%), and only 45% say that their workplace has a culture where people who openly share feelings and thoughts would not be adversely impacted.

Workplace culture and policies that are in place



Blue-collar workers are significantly less likely to feel their work environment or policies are conducive to sharing issues or getting help: for example, only 40% say that their senior leaders understand the importance of prioritising mental health, versus 49% of white-collar employees.

Workplace culture and policies that are in place



This data shows that much remains to be done to rid workplaces of stigma around mental health and create psychological safety for all workers, despite an increased focus in recent years on acknowledging the importance of mental wellbeing at work and beyond.



“ Blue-collar workers are significantly less likely to feel their work environment or policies are conducive to sharing issues or getting help. ”

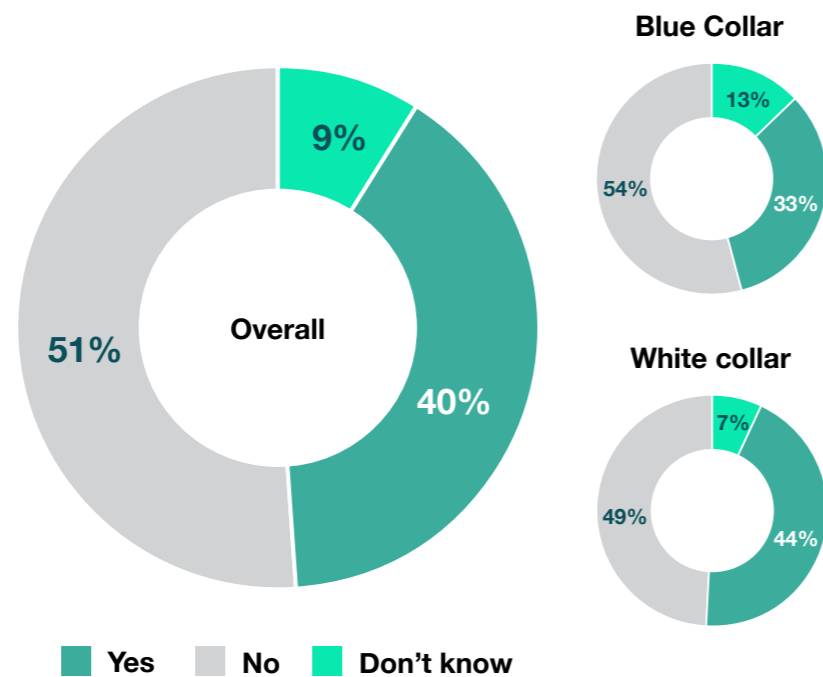
SETTING THE TONE: THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF LEADERSHIP ON MENTAL HEALTH

Taken together, the findings around the incidence of mental health challenges among workers, the extensive impact on their experiences at work, and the pervasive stigma holding people back from disclosing issues to colleagues send a strong message to corporate leaders that mental health cannot be seen solely as a personal issue, but as a true business imperative. Helpfully, the data also provides insights into the impact that some actions taken by employers can have - starting with the role of senior leaders in destigmatising mental health in the workplace, and the effect this can have on people seeking help.

WHEN LEADERS SPEAK OPENLY ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH, THE IMPACT ON EMPLOYEES IS UNDENIABLY POSITIVE

When asked whether the head of their organisation talks about mental health, only 40% of workers answer positively. This number falls to just a third for blue-collar workers. In organisations where senior leaders do not openly address mental health, six in ten employees feel that they should.

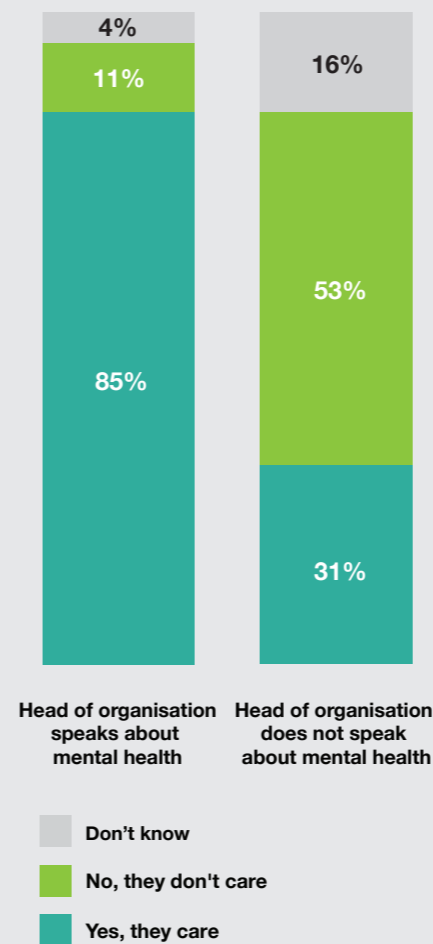
Head of organisation speaks about mental health



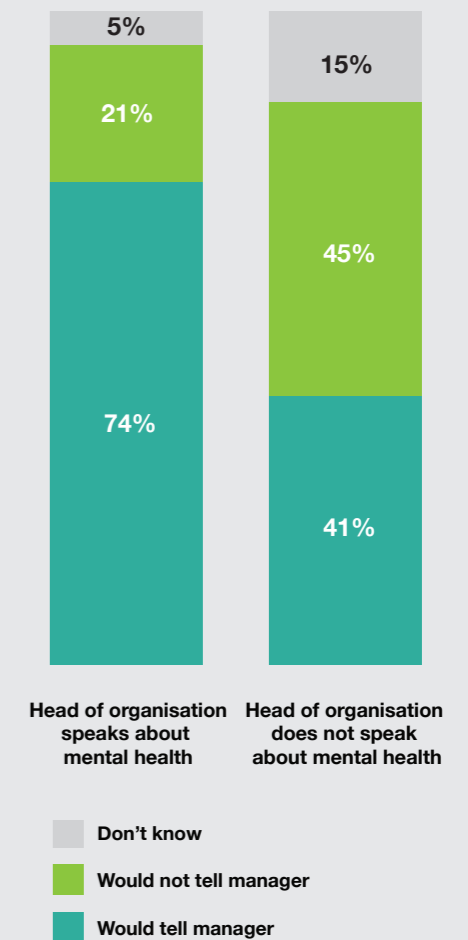
This is significant, because the research shows a clear improvement in perceptions and attitudes to work when heads of organisations choose to speak about mental health. Eighty-five percent of workers feel their employer cares about their mental health in organisations where the most senior leader speaks about mental health, versus only 31% in places of work where they do not.

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, three quarters (74%) of people are willing to disclose their issues to their managers, compared to 41% where they don't.

Thinks employer cares about employee mental health

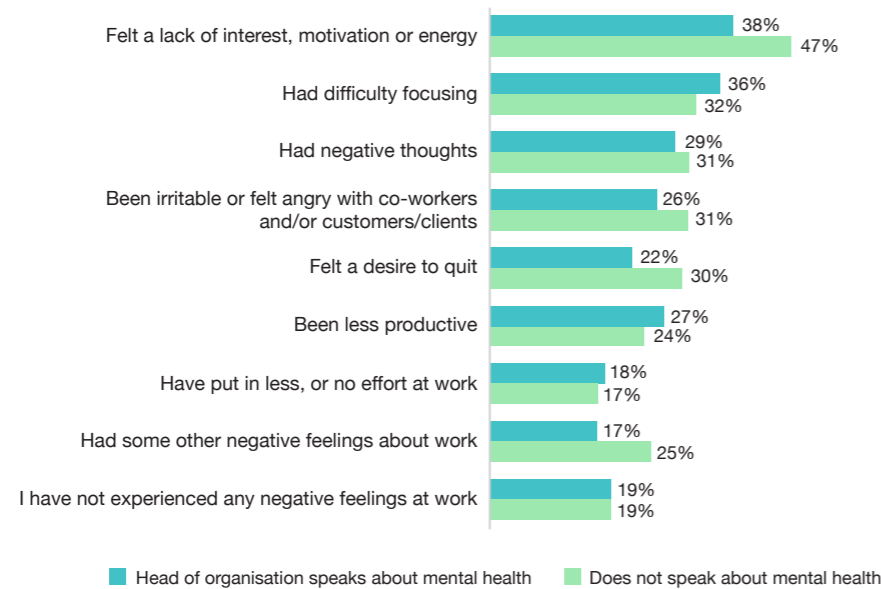


Would tell manager about mental health challenges



Importantly, whether senior leaders speak about mental health or not seems to impact individual feelings and behaviours: those in organisations where senior leaders do not speak up are more likely to feel a lack of interest, motivation or energy (47% vs 38%), be irritable with clients or colleagues (31% vs 26%), or feel a desire to quit (30% vs 22%).

Feelings at work



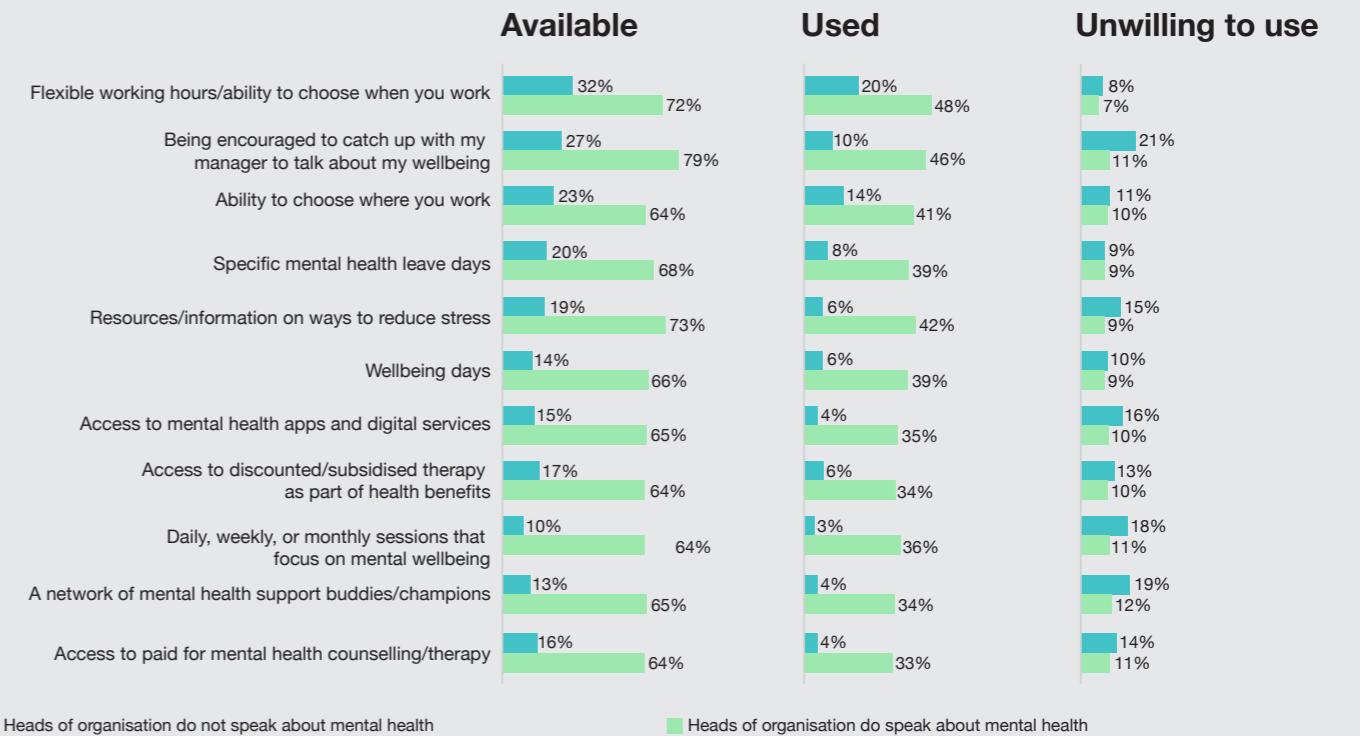
LEADERS' OPENNESS ON MENTAL HEALTH TRANSLATES INTO MORE SUPPORT AT WORK, AND MORE PEOPLE USING THAT SUPPORT

The research also offers evidence that, when the tone on the importance of mental health is set at the top of the organisation, resources and policies to support wellbeing are more widely available and used.

Sixty eight percent of respondents working for leaders who speak about mental health say they are offered mental health leave days (vs 20% in organisations where senior leaders do not talk about mental health), 79% feel encouraged to talk to their managers about their wellbeing (vs 27%) and 73% say they can access resources on how to reduce stress (vs 19%).

Employees are then also much more likely to use those resources. This applies to making use of flexible hours (48% vs 20%), catching up with line managers to talk about wellbeing (46% vs 10%) and access to resources to reduce stress (42% vs 6%).

Mental health support



This contrast in outcomes shows a strong relationship between leaders speaking about mental health, and employees feeling supported at work. A visible commitment at the top seems therefore to be correlated with better mental health in the workplace.

TRUST AND PROXIMITY: THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF LINE MANAGERS

Besides the instrumental role that senior leaders can play in speaking about mental health, the data also reveals the extent to which the behaviours and skills of line managers can influence an employee's experience and wellbeing at work. Indeed, the findings indicate the impact of the manager is even greater than that of the leaders higher up in an organisation - emphasising both the personal responsibility of managers, but also the importance of employers supporting their skills and confidence in discussing mental wellbeing.

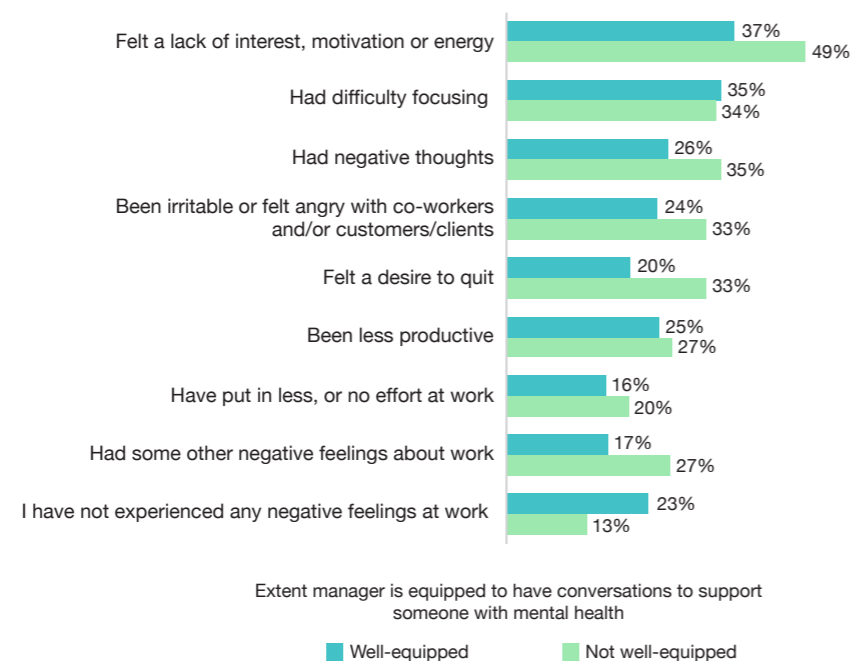
A MANAGER'S ABILITY TO HOLD MENTAL HEALTH CONVERSATIONS MAKES A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON SOMEONE'S EXPERIENCE AT WORK

Given how much an employee's experience of work is influenced by their manager, the personal behaviours and attitudes of those with line management responsibilities are likely to be a key factor in supporting people's wellbeing.

Therefore, unsurprisingly, those who consider their direct manager well-equipped to hold conversations about mental health report fewer negative feelings at work – including desire to quit or lack of interest, motivation and energy - than when they have a senior leader who speaks about mental health. Only 23% in this group share having had no negative thoughts in the month before the survey.

Conversely, workers who feel their manager is not equipped to have supportive mental health conversations report markedly worse experiences. Half (49%) have felt low levels of motivation (vs 37%), and a third report having felt a desire to quit in the month before the survey (vs 20%).

Feelings at work



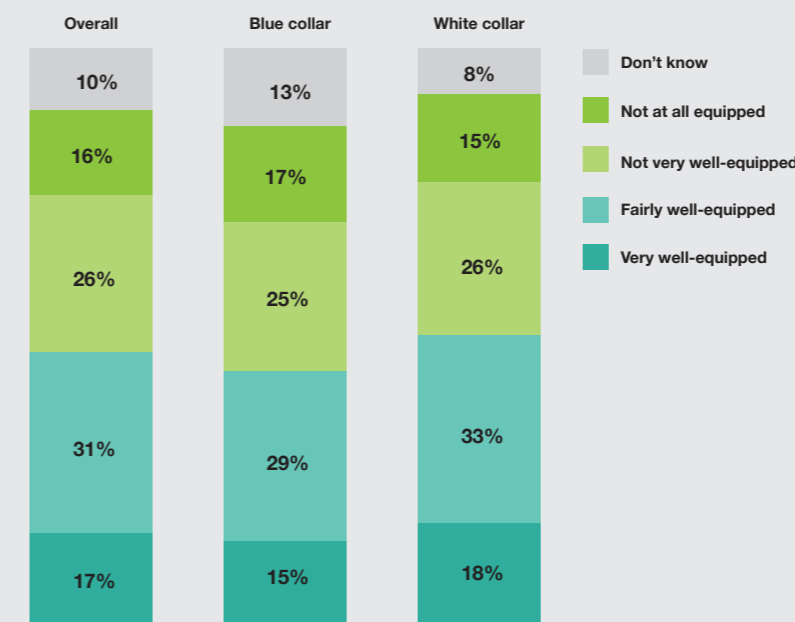
DESPITE THIS, MANY EMPLOYERS ARE UNDER-INVESTING IN THEIR MANAGERS' SKILLS ON MENTAL HEALTH

While over six in ten people surveyed feel their manager would be supportive if they shared their mental health challenges with them, only 48% believe they are equipped to hold conversations that would help someone with mental health issues. This number is even lower among blue-collar workers (44%).

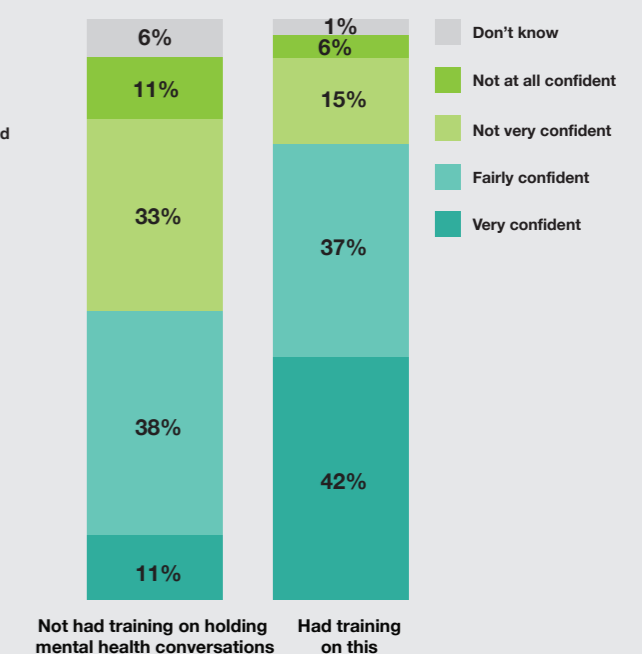
Only four in ten people with line management responsibilities in the survey say they have had training on holding mental health conversations with colleagues, while overall, less than a third of workers say they have had this training. Those who haven't had training report much lower levels of confidence in their ability to have such conversations (49% vs 79% of those who have been trained). Even among those who have had training, 45% say this training was a 'one off'.



How well manager is equipped to hold mental health conversations



Managers' confidence in own skills increases with training



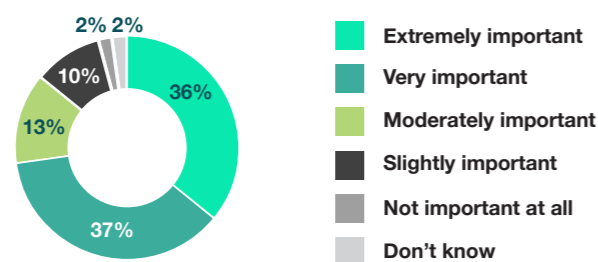
WORKPLACE SUPPORT: EXPECTATIONS VERSUS REALITY

The low proportions both of senior leaders openly addressing mental health and managers having been trained to have conversations about mental health are concerning. These numbers are even more stark when viewed alongside indicators that show the value that employees place on their employers supporting their wellbeing. Here, the data reveals that expectations are often unmet, and that measures and policies dedicated to supporting mental health are often insufficiently available or ineffective.

WORKERS HAVE HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF THEIR EMPLOYERS WHEN IT COMES TO SUPPORTING THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

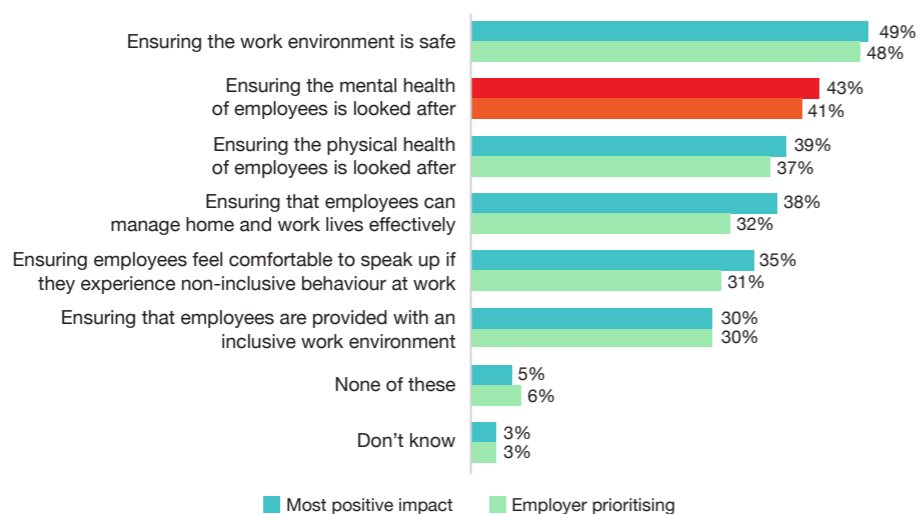
Whether mental health issues stem from work-related causes or not, it is clear that workers look to their employers to provide support. Almost three quarters (73%) of the workers surveyed say that it's extremely or very important for employers to prioritise the mental health of their workforce.

Importance to employee



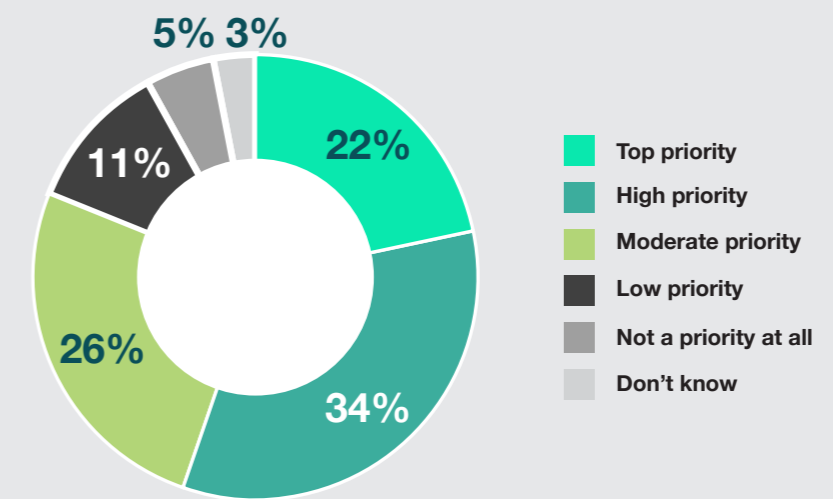
In addition, when asked about what can make the most positive impact on them personally at work, 43% of people mention employers looking after their mental health – ranking it second highest of the six factors measured, after providing a safe working environment (49%), which itself is a condition for wellbeing.

Three aspects with most positive impact and which employer is prioritising



However, only 56% of respondents believe that supporting the mental health of employees is a current top or high priority for their employers – pointing to a gap in expectations versus reality when it comes to business leaders fulfilling their duty of care to their workforce. In fact, three people in ten feel that their employers do not care about their mental health at all.

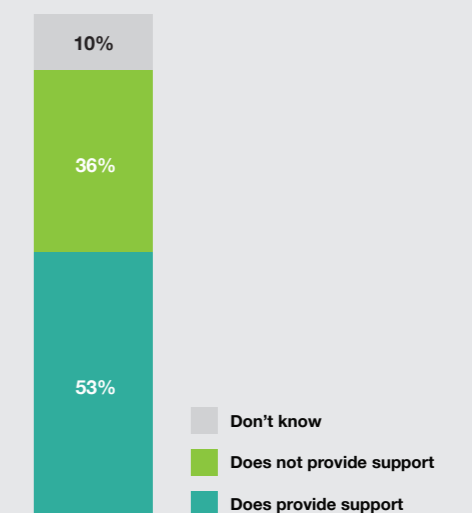
Priority placed by employer



THE MEASURES AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT MENTAL WELLBEING ARE NOT MEETING EMPLOYEES' NEEDS

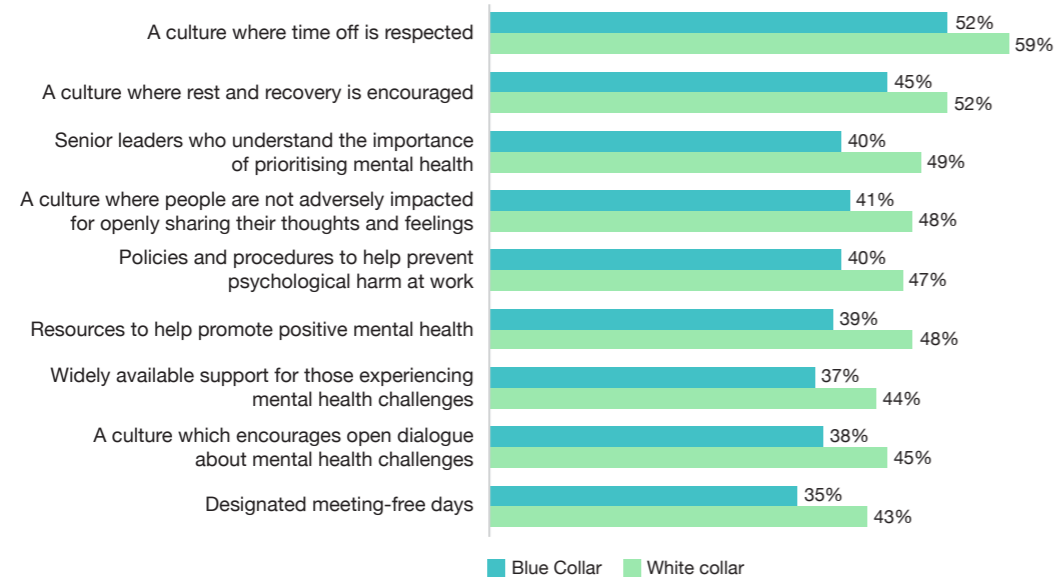
The disconnect between the expectations of employees and what they experience in terms of workplace support manifests itself in culture-related indicators (see Section 2) but also in the availability, use and effectiveness of dedicated resources. While 53% feel that their employer does provide some type of mental health support, less than half (47%) of respondents say they have helpful measures dedicated to supporting mental wellbeing at their disposal at work.

Employer provides mental health support to staff



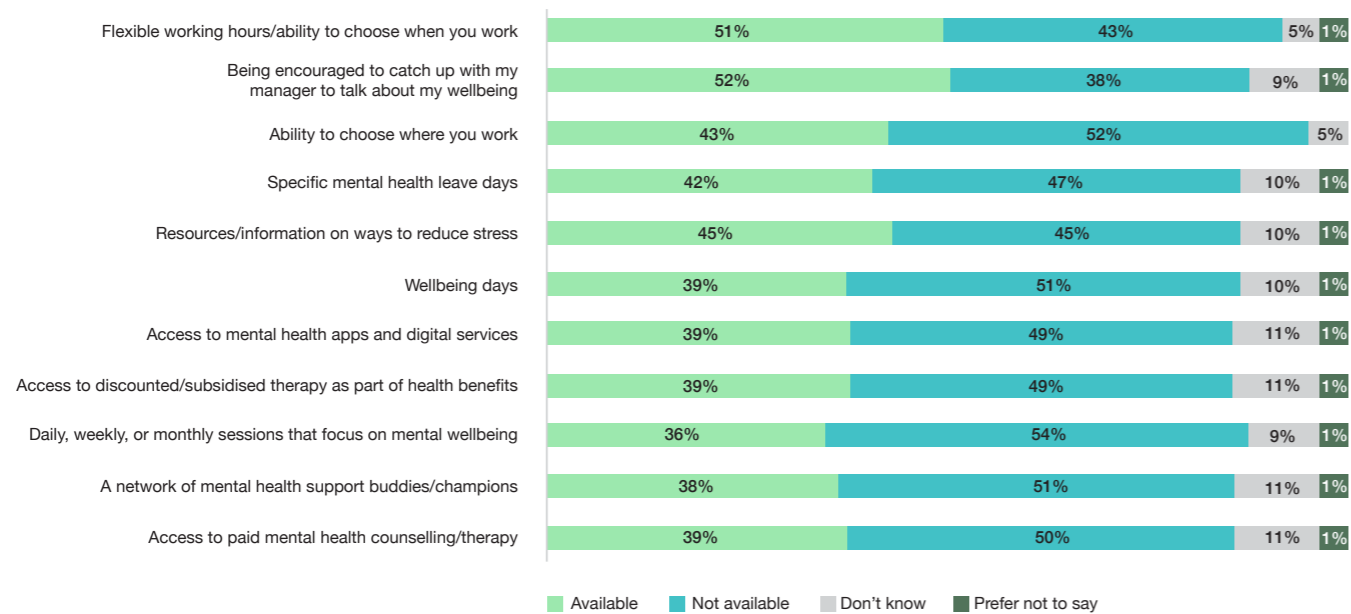
In the blue-collar population, only 39% say they have access to any resource that helps promote positive mental health – as opposed to 48% of white-collar workers.

Workplace culture and policies in place



A similarly low proportion of all workers say their organisation offers tailored support such as wellbeing or mental health leave days, access to discounted therapy, or mental health champions networks – relying instead on more generic benefits such as annual leave, paid time off or flexible hours to manage issues. Only 45% of respondents say their employer has introduced policies and procedures to prevent psychological harm at work.

Types of support available



Even when dedicated resources are available, people’s willingness to use them is often low. Only about half of those having access to tailored resources - such as MH leave days, discounted therapy or catch-ups with managers to discuss wellbeing - actually use them.

Fifteen percent of people say they are unwilling to use resources where speaking to managers or workplace ‘mental health champions’ is involved. This is a higher proportion, in terms of people choosing not to use available support, than for other types of resources. This could be linked to the stigma that some people feel around speaking about mental health to colleagues (see Section 2), or to the belief that managers are insufficiently equipped to hold helpful conversations about wellbeing (see Section 4).



THE WAY FORWARD: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUSINESS LEADERS

The findings from this research are stark. Mental health challenges are widespread among workers, with clear negative impacts on their performance and attitudes. Despite this, the stigma around mental health in the workplace remains strong, and many working environments are still considered to be insufficiently open or supportive. In some cases, the workplace itself can undermine workers' mental health.

However, the data reveals clear areas that business leaders can focus on to address these issues and create conditions that will foster positive mental health in their organisation.

Based on the findings from this research as well as the range of qualitative insights and best practice examples gathered by the GBC, below are five recommendations for all business leaders committed to making their workers' mental wellbeing a priority:

1. Use your voice as a senior leader to destigmatise mental health in the workplace and empower people to seek help.

Why - When it comes to mental health, the impact of leading by example cannot be underestimated. This research confirms that senior leaders who personally discuss topics related to mental health – be it sponsoring policies, encouraging the use of resources, or storytelling – can have a noticeable influence on how people feel and act in the workplace.

A vocal leader can help challenge stigma, remove fears of judgment or penalty, and empower workers at all levels to share issues and ask for help. This in turn is likely to result in fewer people having negative emotions and attitudes at, or towards, work.

From insights shared within GBC there is also plenty of anecdotal evidence that leaders authentically sharing their personal experiences of mental health can be hugely positive – with 'leadership vulnerability' increasingly seen as a strength rather than a weakness, and a powerful tool in changing people's mindsets.

How - Embed mental health as a recurrent theme in your communications, model the right behaviours, and set clear expectations from your senior leaders to do the same. By speaking up, you can go a long way towards creating open cultures that support mental wellbeing.

2. Invest in your line managers' ability to be empathetic leaders, and reward the right behaviours.

Why - Through their regular interactions and responsibilities, managers are logically best placed to support, or potentially to undermine, the mental health of their team members in the workplace. The data confirms this, but also shows that too few employers currently focus on building the skills and confidence of managers to provide that support. This research makes obvious the link between the ability of managers to hold supportive conversations around mental health, and positive

experiences of work. Investing in dedicated training for line managers at all levels is therefore likely to be one of the most effective steps you can take to support your workforce. This is supported by WHO recommendations¹, and evidenced by the successful outcomes of a range of learning and development programmes implemented by several GBC members.

How – Roll out regular training on mental health for all line managers, starting at the top of the organisation. Make sure this training encourages people to share experiences and learn from each other. Going beyond training, look for other ways to make empathetic and accessible leadership the norm, including: gathering employee feedback and linking specific skills to rewards and recognition; being transparent and consistent on sanctions when expectations are not met; and including targeted screening questions in recruitment. Championing openness and vulnerability as per recommendation 1 is also a powerful way for you to inspire managers at all levels to do the same.

3. Make a range of dedicated mental health resources available to your employees and normalise their use.

Why - This survey shows that resources tailored to support people's mental wellbeing at work are often insufficiently available, visible or effective. Alongside genuinely supportive cultures through open communication and inclusive behaviours (the 'software' of a company's approach to mental health), it is key to offer range of measures to your employees (the 'hardware'), and to regularly review their impact and uptake. These measures are needed in addition to broader means for people to manage issues, such as taking paid time off or working flexibly.

How - Recognising that different people, generations and groups will have different needs and preferences when it comes to access and privacy, provide a range of resources that span face-to-face options (eg. mental health champions, counselling, wellbeing days) and virtual or anonymous ones (eg. wellbeing apps, helplines). Monitor which resources are best used, seek feedback on the effectiveness of all measures offered (especially where uptake is low) and take action as needed. Use these resources yourself, attend dedicated sessions, share your experiences as appropriate and get other leaders to do the same to help remove fear of judgment and any stigma around seeking help.

4. Take proactive steps to meet the needs of younger workers, and encourage intergenerational dialogue.

Why - The numbers show significant differences in the experiences of, and attitudes to, mental health between workplace generations – with Gen Z workers twice as likely as Boomers to experience mental health challenges, or to feel a desire to resign when they do. Mental health is undeniably at the forefront of younger workers' minds, and drives some of their career decisions. It is imperative for employers to recognise this, and to meet their expectations in terms of support. Gen Zs and millennials already make up a significant part of the working population. Meeting their needs is crucial not only to attract and retain younger talent, but also to ensure that colleagues from older generations and in more senior roles understand how to grow that talent.

¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-at-work>

This is necessary not only to ensure people thrive at the current stage of their career, but also to enable them to become resilient and empathetic leaders for future generations.

How - Include dedicated mental health questions in regular surveys which explore the ‘software’ as well as the ‘hardware’ (see above) of your mental health response, and analyse the results by age demographic. Actively engage your younger workers on what they expect and where your organisation falls short through employee networks and dedicated wellbeing events. Establish initiatives that encourage intergenerational dialogue such as reverse mentoring or training sessions where different generations are encouraged to share their lived experiences, preferences and priorities.

5. **Anchor your approach to mental health in a broad and consistent diversity and inclusion strategy.**

Why - Along with younger workers, people in under-represented groups are considerably more likely to experience mental ill health, especially neurodivergent workers and those with disabilities. They also report much higher levels of discrimination when they share issues with their managers.

In addition to focusing on understanding and addressing the causes for these disproportionate impacts and non-inclusive behaviours, business leaders have a key role to play in preventing work-related issues from arising in these groups in the first place. Feeling included and valued for who you are and what you can contribute to the workplace is an important protective factor, especially in cultures where stigma against under-represented groups remains strong. Indeed, work can play a significant role in giving people a sense of belonging and allowing them to bring their genuine and best self to work.

How - Providing a culture where everyone feels understood and respected requires a consistent and long-term commitment: celebrate your workforce’s diversity as a consistent theme in your leadership narrative, support storytelling campaigns and Employee Resource Groups where lived experience can be shared, and sanction non-inclusive behaviours consistently at all levels of the organisation.

Conclusion

The data in this report, spanning 12 countries across the globe across a wide range of demographics and exploring the causes and effects of mental ill health at work, amounts to an urgent call to action to all employers: acknowledge the extent to which mental illness affects people in the workplace, and take meaningful and long-term action in response.

This report’s findings show that there is no trade-off between supporting employee mental health and business performance: the two are positively correlated. Many workers are affected by mental health challenges at least at one point in their career, undermining their performance, productivity and working relationships. On the other hand, fulfilling work and supportive colleagues can go a long way to improving people’s mental health.² This gives corporate leaders a clear responsibility to create the conditions that support mental wellbeing.

“ This report’s findings show that there is no trade-off between supporting employee mental health and business performance: the two are positively correlated. ”

2 <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240053052> - p 65-67

Wherever an organisation is on its mental health journey, visible and sustained action is needed. Signing the [Leadership Pledge](#) can help start or accelerate that journey.

Making workplace mental health a priority – The Leadership Pledge

The Leadership Pledge was created by GBC to support organisations advancing on their workplace mental health journey – providing both a visible commitment to supporting workplace wellbeing and a roadmap for action. By signing the Pledge, leaders join a community of trailblazers, enabling them to receive support from equally committed peers.

Building on the three-year GBC campaign, MindForward Alliance is taking the Leadership Pledge forward, growing and supporting the global community of visionary leaders committed to prioritising workplace mental health.

THE PLEDGE

As a responsible business leader, I recognise that I play a critical role in raising awareness and enabling support for people within my organisation. By signing this pledge, I commit to playing my part by making mental health a visible priority in every region in which we operate.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

Develop and deliver an action plan to support good mental health in our organisation.

Promote an open culture around mental health, working towards eliminating stigma.

Take proactive steps to develop our culture and ways of working towards creating positive mental health and reducing mental ill-health.

Empower all our people to manage and prioritise their own mental health, and to support one another.

Signpost our people to mental health tools and the support they need.

Regularly measure the impact of our efforts, being open about our progress, to influence and inspire change in our organisation and beyond.



METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted by Kantar, on behalf of the Global Business Collaboration for Better Workplace Mental Health (GBC), with fieldwork completed between 27 July and 30 August 2023.

The survey was conducted online with respondents sourced from online panels, and completed by a total of 12,210 individuals across 12 countries, with weighted profiles shown below.

	Global	Australia	Brazil	China	Germany	India	Japan	Nigeria	South Africa	Spain	UAE	UK	USA
Sample	12210	1001	1001	1000	1001	1201	1001	1002	1001	1001	1000	1001	1000
Gender													
Male	58%	52%	56%*	55%	55%	74%	57%*	56%*	54%*	53%	78%*	52%	53%
Female	42%	47%	43%	45%	45%	26%	42%	44%	44%	47%	21%	48%	46%
Non Binary	x	1%	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	1%
Age													
18-24	11%	11%	14%	8%	7%	23%	9%	17%	10%	4%	9%	10%	9%
25-34	27%	26%	27%	28%	21%	27%	19%	30%	36%	21%	41%	24%	27%
35-44	26%	24%	27%	27%	22%	22%	25%	30%	28%	27%	33%	22%	25%
45-54	22%	22%	20%	26%	27%	16%	27%	18%	19%	28%	16%	25%	25%
55-65	13%	16%	11%	12%	22%	13%	20%	5%	7%	20%	2%	19%	14%
Manager or not													
Manager	36%	34%	37%	38%	27%	51%	30%	50%	29%	30%	51%	29%	30%
Not Manager	64%	66%	63%	62%	73%	49%	70%	50%	71%	70%	49%	71%	70%
Role type													
Blue collar	37%	46%	38%	18%	41%	23%	47%	22%	39%	40%	30%	46%	52%
White collar	63%	54%	62%	82%	59%	77%	53%	78%	61%	60%	70%	54%	48%

*Percentages do not necessarily add to 100% due to rounding

Participants were aged 18 to 65, and either in full-time or part-time paid employment. Respondents participated by filling in a 10-minute online survey.

Data was weighted to a representative profile of the employed population on age and gender, and to a nationally representative profile, based on available regional statistics. Countries were then weighted to be equally represented in the global findings.

In Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria, UAE, India and China, the sample skews to a younger audience (aged under 55), given the makeup of the working population.

Generations are based on the respondent's age at the time of the survey:

- Gen Zs: 19 to 28 years old
- Millennials: 29 to 40 years old

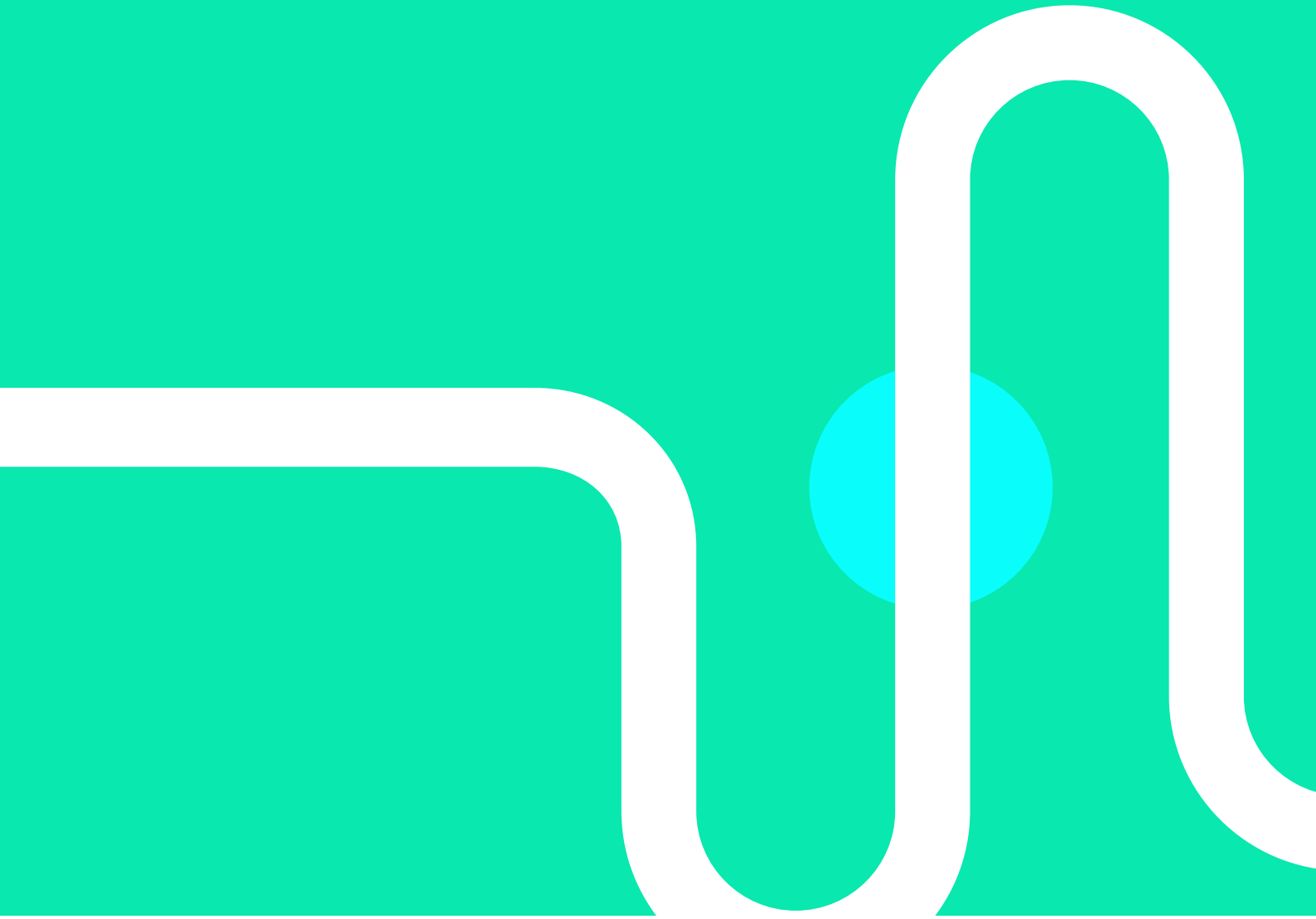
- Gen Xs: 41 to 58 years old
- Boomers: 59 to 67 years old

“White-collar workers” include those self-identifying as working in:

- Managerial or professional work
- Office, administrative or other clerical work

All others are deemed to be “blue-collar workers”, namely those working in:

- Armed forces or protective services
- Personal care (including caring for sick, elderly, children; providing leisure and travel services; beauty and personal care services)
- Shop or restaurant or hospitality work
- Skilled trades
- Other manual work
- Other type of work



THE GLOBAL BUSINESS COLLABORATION
for Better Workplace Mental Health