

Mental Health at Work Report 2017

Executive summary, calls to action and recommendations

Business is waking up to the scale of poor mental health in the workplace, but there is still a long way to go.

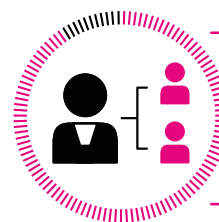
Our second National Employee Mental Wellbeing Survey in partnership with YouGov, part of a three-year collaborative project with business and five national partners, reveals that although there has been progress against our three calls to action and recommendations in the 2016 report, too many men and women with mental health issues* are suffering in silence at work, unable to seek help from colleagues or managers. Fears of prejudice and exclusion are limiting employees' ability to achieve their full potential, in the workplace or at home.



60% of employees have experienced a mental health problem due to work or where work was a contributing factor at some point in their career, compared to 62% in 2016

Three out every five employees (60%) have experienced mental health issues in the past year because of work, according to our survey. Almost a third (31%) of the workforce have been formally diagnosed with a mental health issue (29% in 2016). The most common diagnosis was depression or general anxiety. While more people

are comfortable talking about mental health at work than in 2016, just 13% felt able to disclose a mental health issue to their line manager. Those who do open up put themselves at risk of serious repercussions. Of those employees who disclosed a mental health issue, 15% were subject to disciplinary procedures, demotion or dismissal (9% in 2016).



91% of managers agree that what they do as a manager affects the wellbeing of their staff

This is a potent example of why a pervasive culture of silence remains entrenched in the workplace. Mental health is still one of the most difficult subjects to talk about at work (out of nine equality and social issues asked about in the survey). Just over half of all employees (53%) feel comfortable talking about mental health issues like depression and anxiety at work, although this is an uplift from 50% in 2016.

* **Please note:** throughout this executive summary, the terms 'mental health issues', 'mental wellbeing' and 'poor mental health' have been used, although the original wording in the YouGov survey questions which respondents answered to used 'mental health problems'. 'Mental health issues' and 'mental wellbeing' refer to the entire spectrum of mental health conditions, and are felt to be less

stigmatising terms. These conditions range from the symptoms of poor mental health relating to stress through to medically-diagnosed conditions such as anxiety, depression, bi-polar disorder and schizophrenia. Business in the Community recognises that the majority of those experiencing the symptoms of poor mental health will fall into the former category, but that all experiences are valid.

Survey partner



Headline sponsor



Executive summary

continued

Within this culture of silence, a disconnect is revealed between senior leaders' vision for workplace mental health and the reality. Those at the top are more likely to feel that their organisation supports employees with mental health issues; 61% of owners, CEOs, managing directors or board members say that staff are supported, compared to 40% of those with no managerial responsibility. Although 91% of managers agree that what they do affects the wellbeing of their staff, just 58% of employees feel that their line manager is genuinely concerned about their wellbeing.

Some progress has been seen, and employers are becoming more aware of the need to offer more support at work. Greater numbers of managers recognise that employee mental health and wellbeing forms part of their responsibilities (84% compared to 76% in 2016). However, many line managers lack training and support in mental health. The lack of training has implications; people are still more likely to turn to people they trust outside work when it comes to their mental health. Around three out of four employees with a mental health issue chose not to involve anyone at work. The main barriers are a reluctance to 'make it formal' (identified by 33%) and fears of negative consequences (29%).

Our 2017 findings show that particular groups, among them young people, men, and black and minority ethnic employees, are more at risk in some areas. Younger employees are more likely to have mental health issues, with 37% of those aged 18 to 29 having been formally diagnosed with a mental health condition, compared to

29% of employees in their 50s. This may be because of growing awareness about mental health among the age group, but they are also less likely to disclose concerns. Less than half (44%) feel comfortable talking about mental health at work compared to 57% of those in their 40s and 50s.

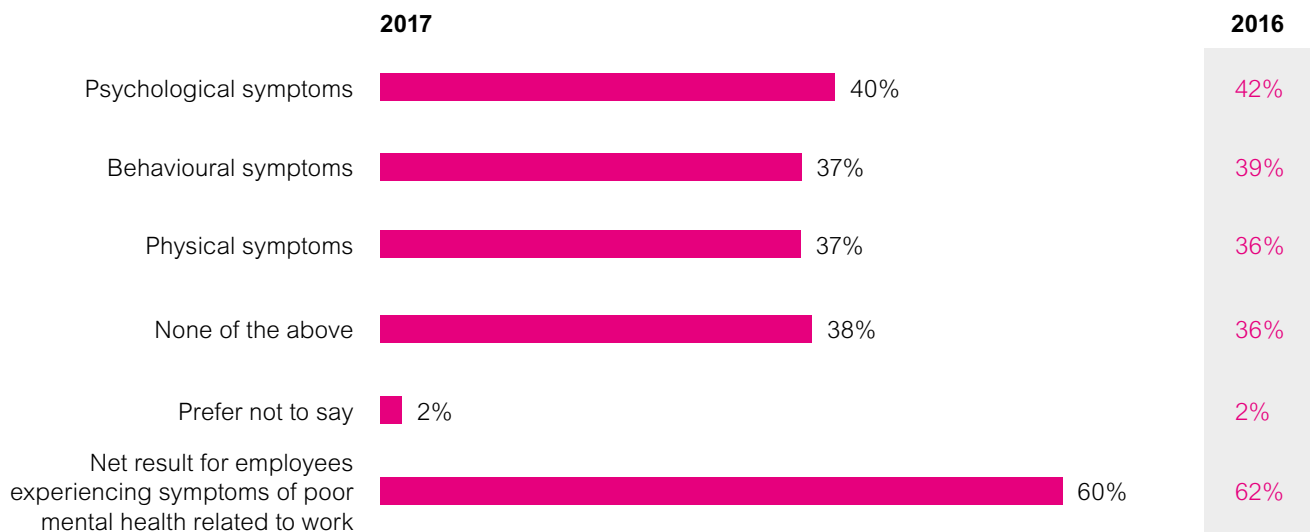


Only a third of 18 to 29 year olds are comfortable talking with their manager about mental health issues compared to almost half of people in their 40s

Today's young generation face an employment landscape that could damage their mental health and wellbeing unless we take action. Business in the Community and the Institute for Public Policy Research launched **Flexibility for Who? Millennials and mental health in the modern labour market**¹ in July 2017 which warned that younger workers risk losing out on access to permanent, secure and fulfilling work, and are more likely to experience poor mental health and wellbeing as a result.

Our survey shows that differences also remain entrenched between men and women in relation to workplace mental health. Women are more likely to report experiencing mental health issues as a result of work, with 64% reporting issues compared to 56% of men. 39% of men sought no support from anyone

Which of the following, if any, have you ever experienced due to work or where work was a contributing factor?



during the most recent occurrence, compared to 28% of women. While women in 2017 find it easier to talk about mental health at work (57%) only 50% of men feel comfortable discussing mental health issues.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees are less likely to feel comfortable talking about mental health at work. They are just as likely to experience mental health issues as other employees, and to have been formally diagnosed with a mental health condition. But only 43% of BAME employees feel comfortable discussing mental health, compared to over half (54%) of white employees.



BAME employees with a mental health condition are significantly less likely than white employees to consult a GP (20%, compared to 29%)

However, the YouGov survey findings show that there are grounds for real optimism. Managers are more positive about workplace mental health than last year, and more employees now believe that their organisation supports those with mental health issues. There is a sense of urgency about the issue which transcends the world of business, with mental health moving to the top of the political agenda as an issue of social justice.

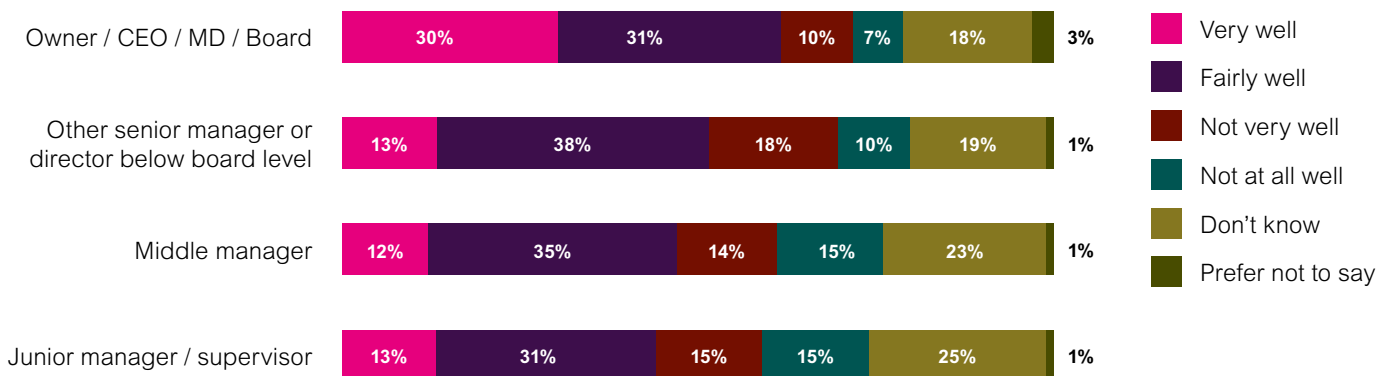
We welcome the Prime Minister’s call for a new partnership to improve mental health support in the workplace. Paul Farmer, CEO of Mind and Chair of the NHS Mental Health Taskforce, and Lord Stevenson of Coddenham, the long-time campaigner for greater understanding and treatment of mental illness, are leading a review, to be published later this year, on how best to ensure employees with mental health issues are able to thrive in the workplace and perform at their best.

Workplace mental health is not just about improving productivity and making a business more competitive. Employers have a duty of care to support their employees to be safe and well at work, and to stay in work. Managers must be given the training, tools, support and organisational culture they need to transform the outlook for mental health at work.

We know that this ambition cannot be achieved overnight. But the time has come for employers to stop talking about what must be done, and to turn promises into action. This three-year survey identifies with absolute clarity the steps that need to be taken.**

Employers and employees must work together to resolve our mental health crisis. Now is the time to end the disconnect.

In your opinion, how well does your organisation support employees who experience mental health problems?



** This is the second year of our three-year project. Throughout this executive summary there are references to the 2016 study, which had the same sample frame and responses from 3,036 UK employees. As a rough guide, a difference of three percentage points between 2016 and 2017 would be considered statistically significant where

the findings were divisive (for example, 53% against 50%). Where a finding is stronger (say, 90% compared to 92%) a difference of just two percentage points would be considered significant. There was no public open survey this year.

Executive summary

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Headline statistics from the 2017 survey

A majority of employees are affected by the symptoms of poor mental health



Three out of every five (60%) employees have experienced mental health issues due to work or where work was a related factor

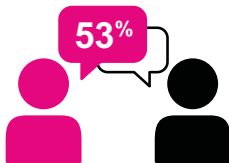


Almost **one in three (31%)** employees have been formally diagnosed with a mental health issue

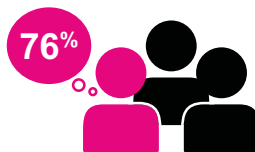


6% of employees have been living with a formally diagnosed condition for over 10 years

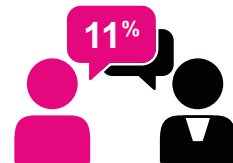
More employees feel comfortable talking about mental health



53% of employees feel comfortable talking about mental health issues like depression and anxiety at work

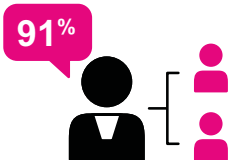


76% of those who have experienced a mental health issue as a result of work feel that colleagues care about their wellbeing...



...but just **11%** disclosed it specifically to a line manager

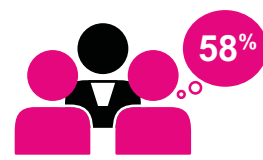
A disconnect persists between the vision for workplace mental health and the reality



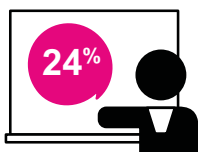
91% of managers agree that what they do affects the wellbeing of their staff



84% of managers accept that employee wellbeing is their responsibility



Only **58%** of employees feel that their line manager is genuinely concerned about their wellbeing



Less than a quarter (24%) of managers have received any training in mental health...



...and **49%** of managers would welcome some specific basic training in mental health

The threat of disciplinary action when experiencing mental ill health is very real



In **15%** of cases where the employee disclosed a mental health issue to a line manager the employee became subject to disciplinary procedures, dismissal or demotion

Calls to action and recommendations

The time has come to stop talking about the importance of good mental health at work and to start taking action. Good practice exists in some organisations, but for the vast majority of employees, mental health is still a no-go area, a subject that cannot be discussed with colleagues or managers for fear of discrimination and victimisation.

Business in the Community launched the National Employee Mental Wellbeing Survey in 2016 to assess the scale of the problem. The results were devastating, yet did not surprise us. They reflected our own learnings from many years of supporting business to take a proactive approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing.

There are some encouraging signs in this second survey, but progress is frustratingly slow. We urge employers to implement three calls to action that will give new purpose to this campaign for justice in mental health:

Calls to action for employers

1 Talk

Break the culture of silence that surrounds mental health by signing the **Time to Change Employer's Pledge**²

2 Train

Invest in basic mental health literacy for all employees and first aid training in mental health to support line manager capability

3 Take action

Implement practical actions from our **Mental Health Toolkit for Employers**³

Recommendations for employers, senior practitioners, business leaders and line managers

1 Take ownership of mental health in your workplace

In the boardroom:

- Sign the **Time to Change Employer's Pledge**², a public commitment to tackle the culture of silence that surrounds mental health.
- Embed wellbeing at the heart of your organisational culture. Adopt Business in the Community's **Workwell Model**⁴, which takes a 'whole person whole system' approach that is aligned to securing strategic objectives.

- Use the Business in the Community and Public Health England **Mental Health Toolkit for Employers**³. It will help you take simple, positive actions to build a culture that champions good mental health.
- Send a clear message that mental health and physical health have the same priority. Adopt a zero-tolerance approach to stigma.
- Appoint a mental health champion to your senior team, to drive better mental health and encourage all leaders to act as role models. Ensure that leadership and management teams are attending mental health training to develop awareness, confidence and capability in managing mental health.

Calls to action and recommendations

continued

On the ground:

- Ensure there is a first aid trainer for mental health within the organisation, who is equipped to know what to do if someone needs help in a crisis.
- Ensure all employees know where to go for guidance and support.
- Even those who know very little or even nothing can learn the basics. Teach all line managers basic literacy around mental health.
- Support employees to have the confidence to start a conversation about mental health with colleagues they are concerned about.
- Share Business in the Community's **Listen Up: Let's Talk Mental Health**⁵ with all employees. This guide contains practical tips on how to start a conversation with someone you are concerned about and how to talk about your own mental health.

2 End the disconnect

- Challenge yourself to reconsider the mental health support on offer in your workplace; it may not be as good as you think it is. Don't wait to be told. Find out what your teams think and be prepared to make changes.
- Be clear that you are committed to making very real improvements whatever the starting point. Take action to build on successes and use these to prioritise and drive improvements. Challenge colleagues to be as ambitious as you about mental health.
- Seek employee feedback with a range of informal and formal mechanisms to understand where your gaps exist, including annual and pulse surveys, focus groups and employee forums. Tell employees when you will report back with findings and next steps. Reinforce your commitment to change and encourage participation in feedback.
- Take part in the free annual **Britain's Healthiest Workplace**⁶, with questions aligned to Business in the Community's Workwell Model and providing both employer and employee feedback on health and wellbeing.
- Take part in **Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index**⁷, a benchmark of best policy and practice in workplace mental health which allows your organisation to find out from the staff perspective how effective your policies and practices are and receive Mind's recommendations on areas to improve. You will also be benchmarked against other organisations participating in the Index and receive public recognition for the work you are doing.

- Identify and remove organisational barriers preventing line managers from effectively managing and supporting colleagues with mental health issues.
- Identify risks to employee mental wellbeing in your workplace. Take action to change culture, policy, and organisational design.

3 Empower line managers

- Give managers the support they need to manage their own wellbeing, with appropriate resources and training. Help them free up time in their day to manage employee mental health.
- Regularly promote to line managers the support at their disposal to foster good mental health. Improve the confidence and capability of managers to have conversations about mental health.
- Train as many line managers as possible in their duty of care in relation to mental health, enable their mental health literacy, equip them to notice changes in their team members and support their continuous skill development to lead conversations about mental health.
- Introduce training about performance and mental health, emphasising the importance of making appropriate, reasonable adjustments.
- Empower managers to develop skill sets within their teams, to ensure there is first aid provision for mental health.
- Encourage line managers to seek support when managing a colleague with mental health issues, from HR, Occupational Health, an EAP or their own line manager.
- Be clear about what reasonable adjustments can be made in the workplace to support an employee with mental health issues. Discussions about performance must take into account any mental health issues, just as they would take into account physical health issues.
- Introduce the concept of 'everyday wellbeing' as a core part of all one-to-one and/or personal development conversations. This will help to normalise conversations around mental wellbeing between staff.
- Use Business in the Community's **Leading on Mental Wellbeing: transforming the role of line managers report**⁸ to embed wellbeing across the organisation.

4 Confront the culture of silence

- Instil an understanding that everyone has a state of mental health, just as they do physical health. Use awareness campaigns to communicate this message, such as Time to Talk Day, Mental Health Awareness Week and World Mental Health Day.
- Normalise the conversation around mental health. Appoint volunteer wellbeing champions, who can lead by example, raise awareness and share information to promote positive messaging about mental health.
- Work with change-makers, including key leaders, HR and other specialists, and wellbeing champions. Give them the knowledge and confidence to promote an open climate where conversations about mental health are accepted as normal.

5 Always respond to employees with appropriate and effective support

- Prevention is better than cure. Create a work environment that promotes mental wellbeing. Business in the Community's Workwell Model, the **HSE Management Standards**⁹ and the **NICE Workplace Health Management Standards**¹⁰ will guide you.
- Give employees a clear and positive wellbeing offering, starting at induction, and reinforced on a regular basis, including resources to support employee resilience and mental wellbeing.
- Ask employees to help create and adapt solutions to their mental health support needs, including reasonable adjustments and Wellness Action Plans.
- Ensure every employee has access to (and knows where to find) appropriate support to stay well and to help manage mental ill health. Issue regular reminders.
- HR and any additional specialist support functions must proactively engage with employees, so that they feel they have a safe space to discuss mental health.
- Employers should follow best practice in handling any issues concerning performance, including taking account of any short or long-term mental health issues that may impact on performance.

6 Support people to stay at work or return to work

- Be ready to take steps to enable people to remain in work when possible, and take a phased approach to return to work after a period of ill health.
- Be aware of comorbidity of mental and physical health issues, and take a whole systems approach which supports reasonable adjustments for physical and mental wellbeing.
- Know your legal obligations to consider reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act (2010).
- Always seek the full agreement of an employee for any reasonable adjustment.
- Adjustments might include:
 - i. Alterations to premises
 - ii. Revised working hours
 - iii. Transfer to a different position (temporary or permanent)
 - iv. Allocating some duties to another person to lighten the workload
 - v. Allowing absence for treatment or rehabilitation
 - vi. Opportunity to work from home
 - vii. Extra training

7 Reinforce mental health support for groups who feel excluded

- Our survey shows that young people and BAME employees are at a particular disadvantage at work. Employers should address barriers that exist in their own organisations.
- Be explicit about the responsibility of line managers towards younger employees and BAME employees.
- Ensure all line managers are able to respond effectively, regardless of gender.
- Use induction courses to emphasise the importance of mental health and wellbeing with the organisation, and to signpost ways in which support is provided.
- Embed mental health and wellbeing into apprenticeship schemes, and give apprentices opportunities to contribute to policies around health and wellbeing.

Specific recommendations for small- and medium-sized organisations

- Do what you can to build emotional resilience. For example, encourage employees to get enough rest. Make sure they go home at a reasonable time and take holidays. Don't expect them to take work emails at all hours.
- Mistakes happen, especially when employees are new or inexperienced. Give honest and objective feedback, and help employees learn from their mistakes.
- Build a culture that recognises, appreciates and rewards achievements.
- Build a good support system, including workplaces where knowledge and good working practices can be shared. Mentor new and recent employees, and agree workloads, priorities and deadlines. Give constructive feedback and share problems.
- Encourage healthy eating and regular physical activity. Provide fresh fruit and fresh water, to discourage consumption of unhealthy snacks and sugary drinks.
- Organise regular out-of-work activities in which the whole team can take part. Encourage volunteering and consider supporting a local charity.
- Create a pleasant work environment, with plenty of natural light and good ventilation where possible. Create pathways so employees can leave their workstations and walk around, and common/ shared spaces.
- Help employees understand and accept that there are some things they just cannot change. Acceptance is key. A good deal of anxiety arises from trying to change things beyond our control. Recognising that is essential to good mental health.
- Encourage employees to identify areas they find difficult and take responsibility for coming up with a plan to tackle these areas. Help them to implement their plan.

Read the full report 'Mental Health at Work Report 2017': <http://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/mental-health-report-2017>

References to resources:

- 1 *Flexibility for Who? Millennials and mental health in the modern labour market*: <https://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/all-resources/research-articles/lippr-report-flexibility-who>
- 2 *Time to Change Employer's Pledge*: www.time-to-change.org.uk/get-involved/get-your-workplace-involved/employer-pledge
- 3 *Mental Health Toolkit for Employers*: <https://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/all-resources/toolkits/mental-health-employers>
- 4 *Workwell Model*: <https://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/wellbeingissues/workwell-model>
- 5 *Listen Up: Let's Talk Mental Health*: https://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/lets_talk_mental_health.pdf
- 6 *Britain's Healthiest Workplace*: www.vitality.co.uk/business/healthiest-workplace
- 7 *Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index*: www.mind.org.uk/workplace/workplace-wellbeing-index
- 8 *Leading on Mental Wellbeing: transforming the role of line managers*: <https://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/all-resources/research-articles/transforming-role-line-managers>
- 9 *HSE Management Standards*: www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards
- 10 *NICE Workplace Health Management Standards*: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng13

Headline sponsor



Our partners



Unique link sponsors



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Survey partner

YouGov
What the world thinks