

THE BURNOUT REPORT

Mental
Health
UK



January 2024



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About us

In a rapidly changing world, Mental Health UK brings together the heritage and experience of four charities from across the country who've been supporting people with their mental health for over 50 years.

Working UK-wide, we deliver both national and local services that enable and empower people to understand and manage their mental health in a person-centred and empathetic way.

With our local service delivery and national expertise in supporting people whose lives are affected by mental health problems, we have

been able to mark a significant footprint in the areas that deeply challenge our mental health and stability.

We provide support and services for some of the biggest societal challenges that pose a threat to people's mental health, including money problems, navigating through the system to get the right support, understanding mental health, loneliness and isolation, and resilience in young people.

We challenge the causes of poor mental health and provide people with the tools they need to live their best possible life at home, school and work.

What is burnout?

Burnout is recognised by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an occupational phenomenon and defined as follows:

Burnout is a syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.

It is characterised by three dimensions:

- Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
- Increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
- Reduced professional efficacy



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Introduction

In publishing this, the first of our annual burnout reports, it is important to acknowledge that a debate is raging. Is it the case, as some would have it, that the record numbers of people who are off work due to mental ill health simply lack the resilience that older generations possessed? Or is it actually that mental illness was always the main cause of workplace absence but people simply lacked the confidence to acknowledge the true cause? Even if either were true, and nothing in life is that simple, we have a problem and burying our heads in the sand or alighting on simplistic explanations will not make it go away.

Our research, which we will now undertake annually, shows that nine out of ten adults experienced high or extreme levels of stress last year, a figure that cuts across almost all generations, and 20% of workers needed to take time off work due to poor mental health caused by pressure or stress.

Quite aside from the individual toll, it hardly needs stating that an economy which has one in five people off unwell is paying a huge cost. While workplaces are generally more alive to the importance of supporting their colleagues' mental as well as physical safety, it is worrying that nearly half of those surveyed say their employer does not have a plan to spot and support people who are dealing with chronic stress. The direct impact this will have on productivity, let alone potential unemployment for those who end up dropping out of the workplace is deeply worrying.

Burnout is not in itself a mental health condition or illness. Neither is stress. The vast majority of us (91%) experience stress and some stress in the workplace to be anticipated and expected. In fact, stress, in moderation, serves a purpose. But left unchecked, sustained and severe stress poses a

threat to both our physical and mental health, and in this context, low levels of burnout are the bellwether of a healthy working environment.

It must be acknowledged, of course, that burnout isn't confined to the workplace; excessive pressures, demands, and difficulties impinge on every facet of our lives. In the shadow of the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis each individual faces unique challenges outside of paid employment, such as debt, fear of losing their home or livelihood, pressures around parenting, ill health and worries about the future.

It is clear that for most people, the COVID-19 pandemic was an unremittingly difficult period but there were of course important social changes that occurred and in particular the flexibility around work location. It is interesting to note that those working in an agile fashion are less likely to cite their working arrangement as a factor contributing to burnout. While many employers have had perfectly valid reasons for wishing colleagues return to a fixed base, getting those support mechanisms in place to encourage and sustain a mentally healthy workplace is even more necessary than ever.



Clearly the onus is not solely on the employer. Self-awareness is fundamental when it comes to early identification of burnout and promoting resilience. Many more younger people feel comfortable acknowledging the stress and pressure they are feeling and while that of course ought to stimulate a conversation with their manager or employer, there is a need for adjustments to be reasonable and within the ambit of support an employer is obligated to provide. A contract is just that – an arrangement between two parties on an agreed set of terms, and compromises will often need to be reached.

Yet these are undoubtedly unprecedented times. With global challenges around issues such as climate change, artificial intelligence, population change and migration, economies around the world will need to make seismic shifts to prepare for their impacts and the prospect of these factors together is for many people, young and old, a potent cause of anxiety. The sense of the problems being just too big to handle is naturally another key factor in burnout and, in so far as any of us are able to make sense of these, an honest conversation about how we adjust is as relevant in the workplace as it is in wider society.

In publishing this report and recognising the growing evidence that the UK is grappling with high levels of work absence and its subsequent cost to individuals, employers and the taxpayer, Mental Health UK is calling on the Prime Minister to convene a national summit, bringing together government ministers, employers and experts to determine how we can create healthy workplaces and best support people to stay in or return to work if they're struggling with stress and poor mental health.

We need to face into the realities that exist if we are to find solutions that make a real impact on people's lives.

**Brian Dow,
Chief Executive, Mental Health UK**





Executive summary

The world has transformed massively in recent years, and our workplaces have not been immune to this transformation. Social and technological changes, as well as unprecedented global events such as the pandemic, have brought with them challenges for employers in maintaining mentally healthy workplaces for their staff.

There is a growing need for proactive discourse around what a “good workplace” looks like in the modern world, and, what the responsibilities are for both employees and employers.

Our research, conducted by YouGov, set out to gain greater insights into public awareness and understanding of burnout, explore our relationship with stress and pressure both in and out of our working lives, and the factors that contribute to burnout for adults in the UK today.

9 in 10 UK adults experienced high or extreme stress in the past year

The vast majority of respondents (91%), acknowledge facing high or extreme levels of pressure or stress at various frequencies over the past year, highlighting a prevalent issue in the population. 5% reported constant, 29% frequent, 34% occasional, and 22% rare instances. Only 8% reported never experiencing stress, while 2% were unsure.

Almost a quarter of UK adults feel unable to manage stress and pressure levels in their lives

While the majority of adults (73%) feel confident in managing stress and pressure levels in their lives, almost 1 in 4 adults (24%) feel unable to do so.

A fifth of workers hit burning point

One in five workers (20%) in the UK needed to take time off work in the past year due to poor mental health caused by pressure or stress.

Is age a factor?

The likelihood that someone had taken time off work in the last year due to poor mental health caused by stress decreased with age, with 34% of workers aged 18–24 having done so, compared with 15% of those aged 55 or over.

Workers aged 35-44 were most likely to have experienced high or extreme levels of stress and pressure often or always in the past year (40%), while workers aged 55 or over were least likely (33%).

While many have returned to the office, home and hybrid working is still being embraced

Half of UK adults in employment (50%) work from a fixed location such as an office, while just over a quarter (26%) have a 'hybrid' or 'agile' working arrangement, with 12% working from home, and 9% based away from home but at various locations.

Working arrangements also affected people's experiences of burnout at work, with 25% of those working from a fixed location (i.e., based at the same office/working location) citing this as a contributing factor, compared with 19% of field-based workers, 16% of home workers and just 14% of hybrid or agile workers. Interestingly, 30% of those who had been mandated back to work from an office or fixed location said this had caused them stress which may have contributed to burnout.

Nearly half of UK working adults say their employer doesn't have a plan in place to spot the signs of chronic stress and prevent burnout in employees

Among UK workers, 29% of respondents indicate that their organisation has plans in place to spot signs of chronic stress and prevent burnout in employees, while 49% report that their organisation does not have any such plans in place.

Varied comfort in talking about mental health with managers and senior leaders at work

While it's encouraging that the majority of working adults (57%) feel comfortable letting their line manager or senior leader know if they were experiencing high or extreme levels of pressure and stress at work, over a third of workers (35%) do not feel comfortable raising these concerns. This indicates some varied level of discomfort – of that 35%, 23% were 'not very comfortable', while 12% were 'not at all comfortable' in discussing such matters with their line manager or senior leaders.

Workplace stressors: high workloads, job insecurity and bullying contributing to risk of burnout

When asked about the factors at work which have caused them stress and may have contributed to burnout in the past year, the majority of working adults agreed that 'a high or increased workload or volume of tasks at work – unpaid' (54%), 'regularly working unpaid overtime beyond contracted hours' (45%) and 'feeling isolated at work' (42%) had done so.

A significant proportion also cited 'fear of redundancy/job security' (40%), 'taking on additional paid work due to the 'cost-of living crisis' (38%), and 'being bullied or intimidated by other colleagues at work' (31%) as factors which have caused them stress and may have contributed towards burnout in the past year.

Lifestyle stressors: poor sleep, cost-of-living crisis and poor physical health contributing to risk of burnout

When asked about the factors in life which have caused them stress and may have contributed to burnout in the past year, the majority of working adults agreed that 'poor sleep' (64%), 'financial uncertainty due to the cost-of-living crisis' (53%), 'money worries in general' (53%), 'poor physical health' (46%) and 'feeling isolated' (43%) had done so.

A significant proportion also cited 'problems in personal relationships' (35%) and 'caring responsibilities' (34%) as factors which have caused them stress and may have contributed towards burnout in the past year.


Connection with others is key in alleviating stress and preventing burnout

When asked about the factors which have helped to alleviate stress and prevent burnout, the majority of adults in the UK agreed that 'having a supportive network of family or friends outside of work' (71%), 'having a healthy work-life balance' (56%) and 'exercising regularly' (56%) had done so. Other in-work initiatives and factors such as 'having a supportive line manager at work' (43%), 'having a supportive network of professional colleagues or peers' (42%), 'reasonable adjustments at work' (38%), 'professional support for mental health' (29%) and 'organisations offering staff training around mental health at work' (24%) were also cited as having a positive impact.



Key findings

The lines between work and home life have become increasingly blurred in recent times. Many of us are working longer hours, and the societal changes caused by the pandemic are still present.



In 2020 and 2021, Mental Health UK commissioned YouGov to conduct polling around UK workers' understanding and experiences of burnout in the workplace, and the factors which may contribute towards it. Our research found that burnout was a problem exacerbated by the pandemic, and that support from employers was lacking.

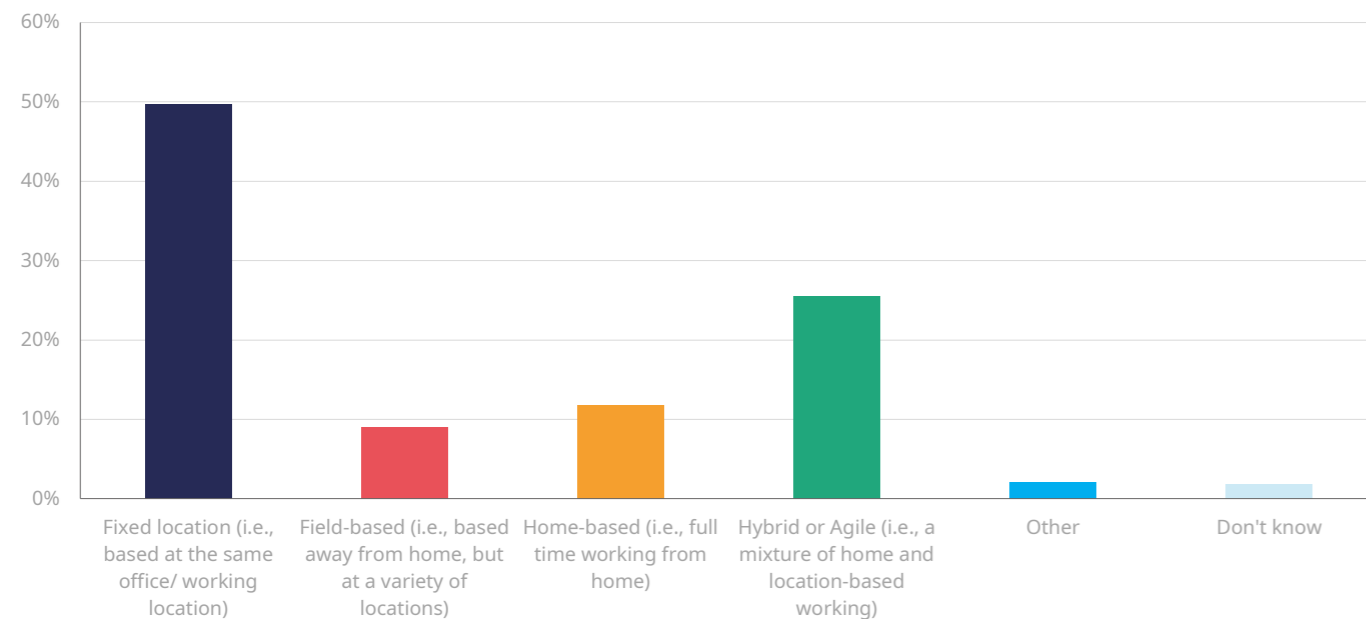
Today, our concerns around burnout have far from been extinguished. That's why Mental Health UK have conducted a study on this issue to learn more about the pressures and challenges people are facing in the present world - both in and out of our working lives - which are leading us to becoming a "burned out" nation.



Setting the scene

While not the case for everyone, the working arena certainly changed for many during the pandemic – most obviously through the rise in ‘home’ or ‘hybrid’ working and the digitising of workflows and relationships. Today, half of UK workers polled (50%) work from a fixed location such as an office, while just over a quarter (26%) have a ‘hybrid’ or ‘agile’ working arrangement, with 12% working from home, and 9% based away from home but at various locations.

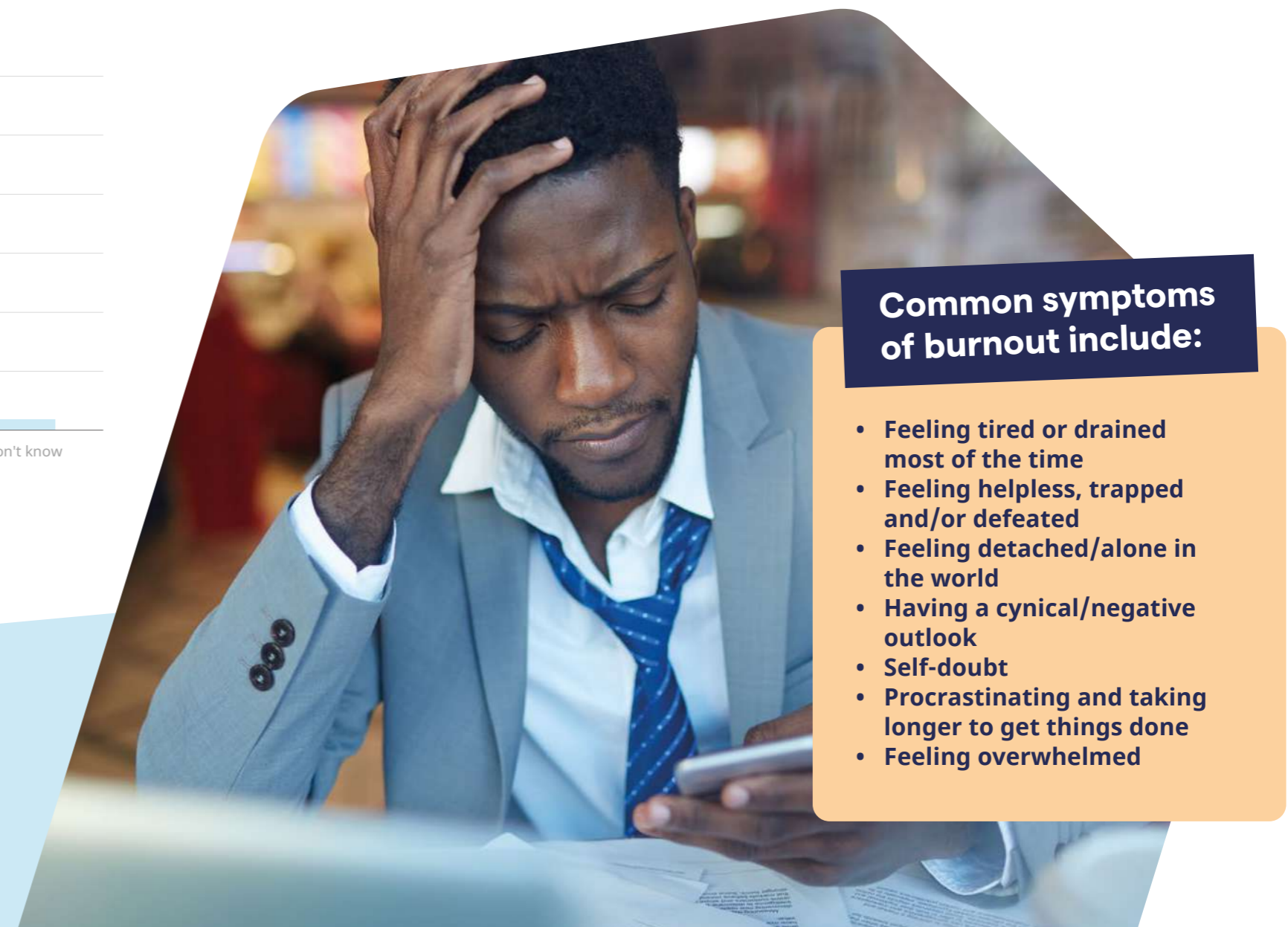
- **Age:** Fixed-location working is the most common working arrangement amongst all age groups. A higher proportion of workers aged 18–24 (56%) worked from a fixed location, while a higher proportion of workers aged 25–34 and 35–44 (29%) have a ‘hybrid’ or ‘agile’ working arrangement.
- **Social grade:** A higher proportion of those from ABC1 social grade work from home or ‘hybrid or agile’ (47%) compared to those from C2DE social grade (20%). Meanwhile a higher proportion of those from C2DE social grade work from fixed or field-based locations (72%) than those from ABC1 social grade (52%).



Public awareness and understanding of burnout

Our study found that public awareness and understanding around burnout is strong. When asked to identify the symptoms of burnout, 93% of UK adults correctly identified some symptoms of burnout, while 63% mistakenly identified at least one symptom of anxiety instead.

- **Age:** Those aged 55+ (95%) are 10 percentage points more likely to spot signs of burnout, compared with those aged 18–24 (86%).
- **Social grade:** Adults from an ABC1 social grade (95%) are 4 percentage points more likely to spot at least one sign than C2DE (91%) counterparts (generally middle/ upper class vs. working class).



Common symptoms of burnout include:

- Feeling tired or drained most of the time
- Feeling helpless, trapped and/or defeated
- Feeling detached/alone in the world
- Having a cynical/negative outlook
- Self-doubt
- Procrastinating and taking longer to get things done
- Feeling overwhelmed

Our experiences of stress and burnout

High or extreme stress is a common foe

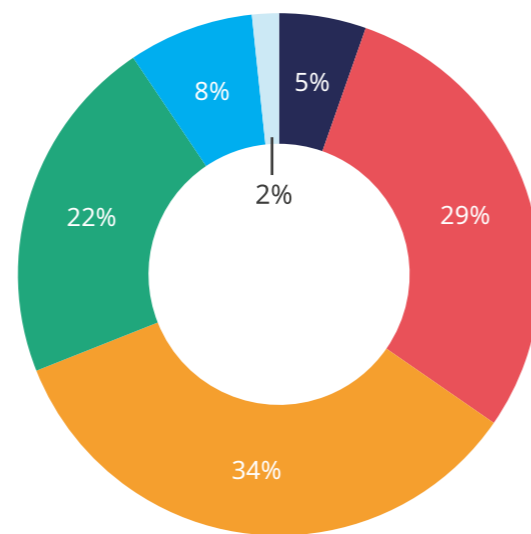
Stress is our body's response to pressure that manifests itself in many different ways. While stress is commonplace in life, long-term exposure to high or extreme levels of stress can result in burnout.

9 in 10 adults in the UK (91%) told us they experienced high or extreme levels of pressure or stress at some point in the past year.

Over a third of adults (34%) told us they experienced high or extreme levels of stress 'always' (5%) or 'often' (29%).

- **Gender:** Women (93%) were 5 percentage points more likely than men (88%) to experience high or extreme levels of pressure or stress in the past year.
- **Age:** Adults aged 35-44 (95%) tended to experience high or extreme levels of pressure or stress more in the past year than any other age group.
- **Region:** Adults in the East of England (94%) tended to experience high or extreme levels of pressure or stress more in the past year than adults in any other region polled. Adults living in Scotland (92%) experienced high or extreme levels of pressure or stress more than counterparts in the other nations that make up the UK – ahead of England (91%), Wales (88%) and Northern Ireland (87%).

- **Working status:** Full-time students (95%) and those unemployed (95%) tended to experience high or extreme levels of pressure or stress more in the past year than any other working status group, followed by 93% of those working full time, and 91% of those working part time. Unsurprisingly, retired adults (84%) experienced high or extreme levels of pressure or stress the least but that figure is still high.
- **Parents:** Those in households with children were on average 4% more likely (94%) than those without children (90%) to experience high or extreme levels of pressure or stress in the past year.

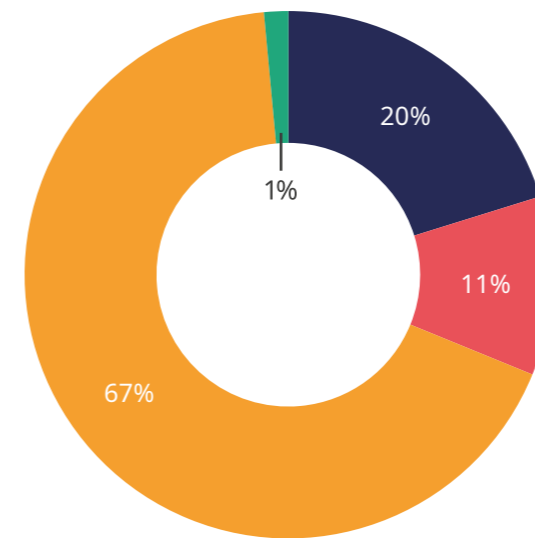


■ Always ■ Often
■ Sometimes ■ Rarely
■ Never ■ Don't know

A fifth of workers hit burning point

Our study found that 1 in 5 workers (20%) in the UK needed to take time off work due to poor mental health caused by pressure or stress in the past year.

- **Gender:** Men (22%) agreed more than women (18%) that they needed to take time off work due to poor mental health caused by pressure or stress in the past year.
- **Age:** Workers aged 18-24 (34%) agreed most with the statement that they needed to take time off work due to poor mental health caused by pressure or stress in the past year. The older the respondent, the smaller the tendency to agree was – with 23% of workers aged 25-34, 20% aged 35-44, 18% aged 45-54, and 15% of workers aged 55+ agreeing with the statement.
- **Region:** Workers based in London (28%) agreed most with the statement that they needed to take time off work due to poor mental health caused by pressure or stress in the past year.
- **Parents:** Non-parents/guardians (23%) agreed more than parents/guardians (18%) that they needed to take time off work due to poor mental health caused by pressure or stress in the past year.



■ Tend to agree, Strongly agree
■ Neither agree nor disagree
■ Tend to disagree, Strongly disagree
■ Don't know



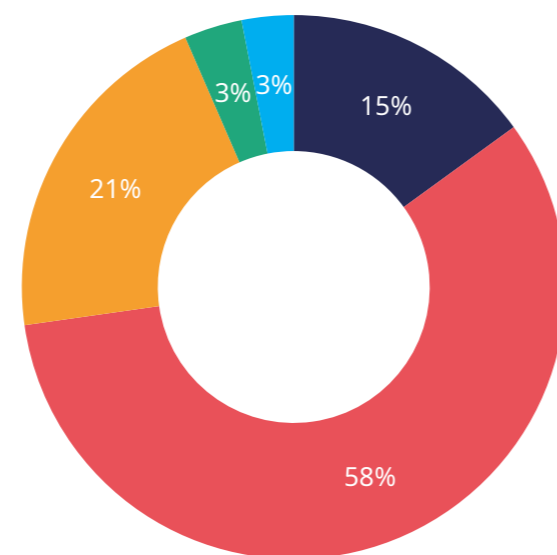
Managing stress and pressure

While the majority of adults (73%) feel able to manage stress and pressure levels in their lives, almost 1 in 4 adults (24%) feel unable to do so.

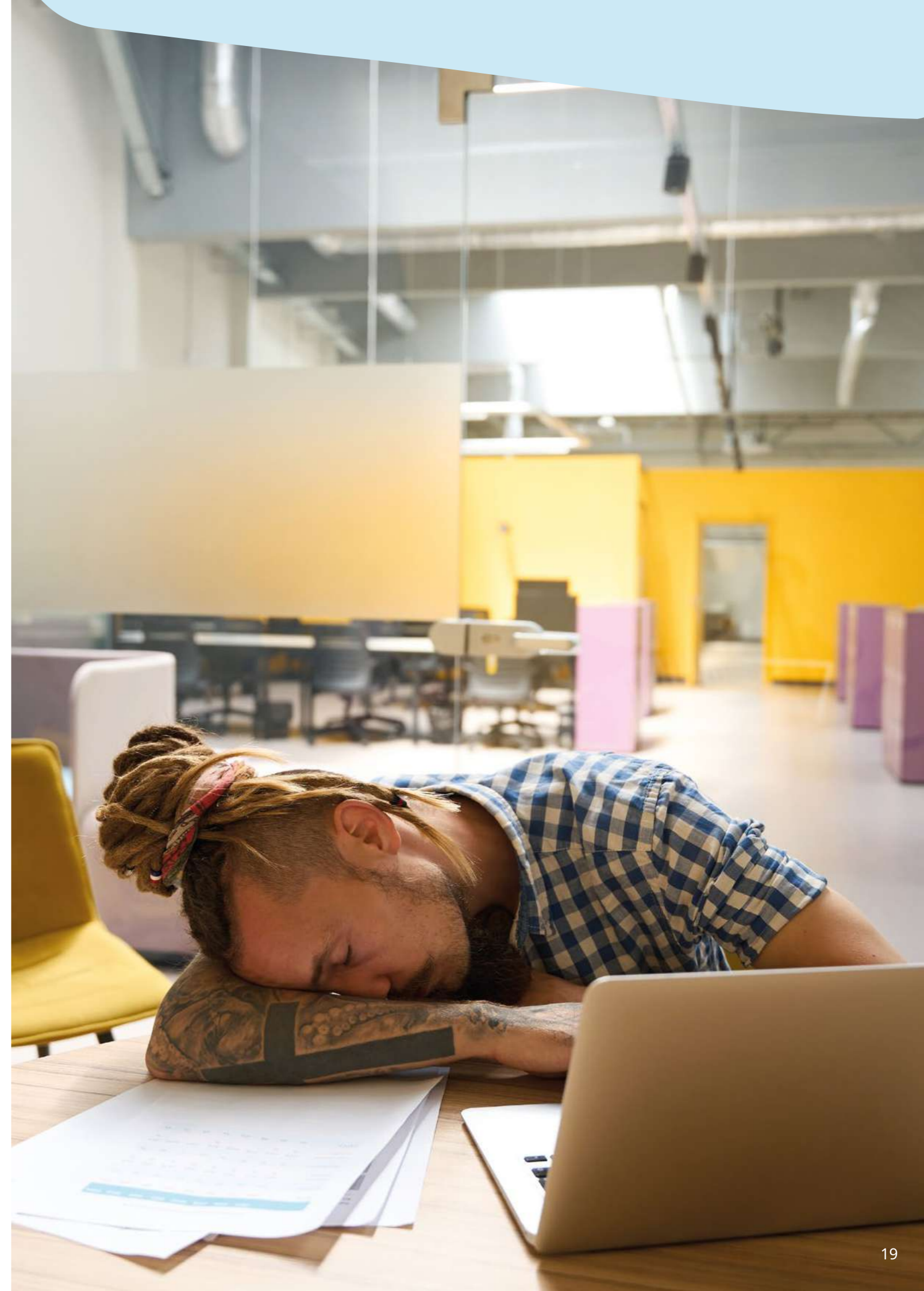
Notably, when that 73% figure is broken down, the majority (58%) felt 'fairly able', while just 15% felt 'very able' – which perhaps provides a clearer indication on confidence around managing stress and pressure.

- **Age:** Adults aged 55+ feel most able (83%) to manage their stress and pressure levels – 18% higher than those aged 25–34 and 35–44 (both 65%) and 17% more than those aged 18–24 (66%). 30% of those aged 25–34 and 35–44 also felt unable to do so, compared with 16% of those aged 55+.
- **Region:** Adults based in the East of England, South of England and in Northern Ireland (75%) felt able to manage their stress and pressure levels, in contrast with those based in the Midlands (28%), the North of England (25%) and London (24%) which were the regions where adults felt least able to do so.

- **Parents:** Parents/guardians (78%) felt 12 percentage points more able to manage their stress and pressure levels than non-parents/guardians (66%). The confidence around this varied depending on the number of children within a household – 73% of those with one child and 74% with two children in their household felt able to manage stress and pressure levels, while just 62% of those with three children or more in their household felt able to manage their stress and pressure levels.



■ Very able
■ Fairly able
■ Not very able
■ Not at all able
■ Don't know



Workplace mental health support

Lack of employer plans to prevent burnout in their staff

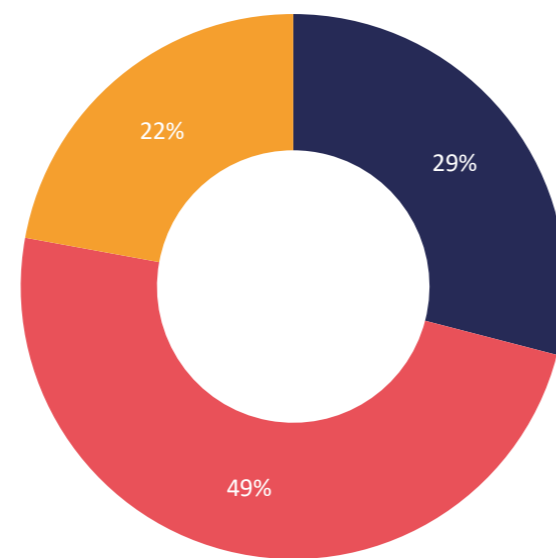
Despite a growing need for better employee mental health support, over two thirds of workers (71%) might not be adequately supported by their employer.

Less than a third (29%) of working adults said their workplace had plans in place to help colleagues spot the signs of chronic stress and prevent burnout in employees, while almost half (49%) of workers said it did not and 22% said they did not know.

By 'plans', we mean either a personally-tailored wellbeing action plan to help individuals to think about what they need to do to stay well at work and what kind of support needed if they became unwell/ too stressed – or an organisation-wide plan or risk assessment for stress, which identifies a risk for staff and explores ways of removing or reducing the risk.

- **Age:** A higher percentage of workers aged 18–24 (42%) said their employer had plans in place to help colleagues spot the signs of chronic stress and prevent burnout in employees in contrast with those aged 35–44 (25%). 52% of workers aged 35–44 and 55+ said their employer did not have plans in place.

- **Industry:** 42% of those working in 'IT and telecoms' and 37% in 'medical and health services' said their employer had plans in place to help colleagues spot the signs of chronic stress and prevent burnout in employees, while 56% in 'retail' said their employer did not.
- **Social Grade:** There is a 6 percentage point difference between ABC1 workers (31%) and C2DE workers (25%) who say their workplace has a plan in place.



■ Yes, it has plans in place
 ■ No, it does not have any plans in place
 ■ Don't know

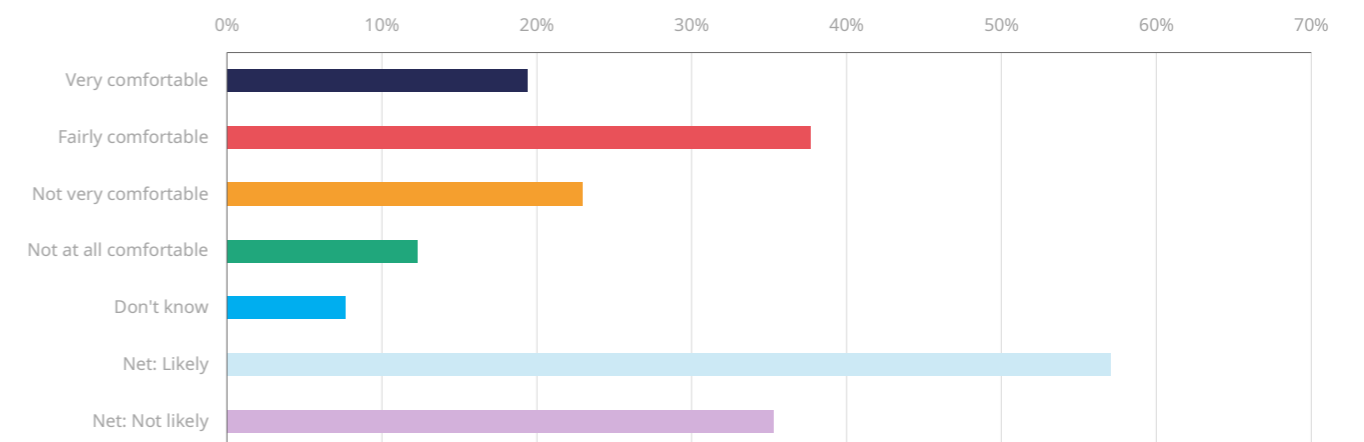
Talking about mental health at work

We know the importance of creating working cultures and environments where talking about our mental health is welcomed and invited - where we are better able to spot the signs of stress and prevent burnout

While it's encouraging that the majority of working adults (57%) felt comfortable letting their line manager or senior leader know if they were experiencing high or extreme levels of pressure and stress at work, over a third of workers (35%) do not feel comfortable raising these concerns.

- **Gender:** Women (59%) were 4 percentage points more comfortable than men (55%) to let their line manager know they were experiencing high or extreme levels of pressure and stress at work.
- **Age:** Workers aged 18–24 (75%) felt most comfortable letting their line manager or senior leader know if they were experiencing high or extreme levels of pressure and stress at work, followed by 25–34-year-olds (62%). 40% of workers aged 45–54 and 39% aged 35–44 felt uncomfortable doing so.

- **Social grade:** Workers from an ABC1 social grade (60%) were 8 percentage points more comfortable than workers from a C2DE social grade (52%) to let their line manager know they were experiencing high or extreme levels of pressure and stress at work.
- **Region:** Workers based in Wales (67%) felt most comfortable letting their line manager or senior leader know if they were experiencing high or extreme levels of pressure and stress at work, while 42% of workers based in the Midlands felt uncomfortable doing so.
- **Industry:** Those working in the 'medical and health services' (66%) felt most comfortable letting their line manager or senior leader know if they were experiencing high or extreme levels of pressure and stress at work, while 28% of 'manufacturing' workers felt uncomfortable doing so.



Contributing factors inside and outside of the workplace

Burnout is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an 'occupational phenomenon'. But with the lines between work and home life becoming increasingly blurred in recent times, we wanted to challenge that notion.

Factors in the workplace

When asked about the factors at work which have caused them stress and may have contributed to burnout in the past year, the majority of working adults agreed that 'a high or increased workload or volume of tasks at work - unpaid' (54%), 'regularly working unpaid overtime beyond contracted hours' (45%) and 'feeling isolated at work' (42%) had done so.

A significant proportion also cited 'fear of redundancy/job security' (40%), 'taking on additional paid work due to the 'cost-of living crisis' (38%), and 'being bullied or intimidated by other colleagues at work' (31%) as factors which have caused them stress and may have contributed towards burnout in the past year.

Working arrangements also affected peoples' experiences of burnout at work, with 30% of those working from a fixed location (i.e., based at the same office/working location) citing this as a contributing factor, compared with 34% of field-based workers, 16% of home workers and just 17% of hybrid or agile workers. Interestingly, 30% of workers said that being mandated back to working in an office or fixed location had caused them stress which may have contributed to burnout.

Focussing on the top key contributing factors:

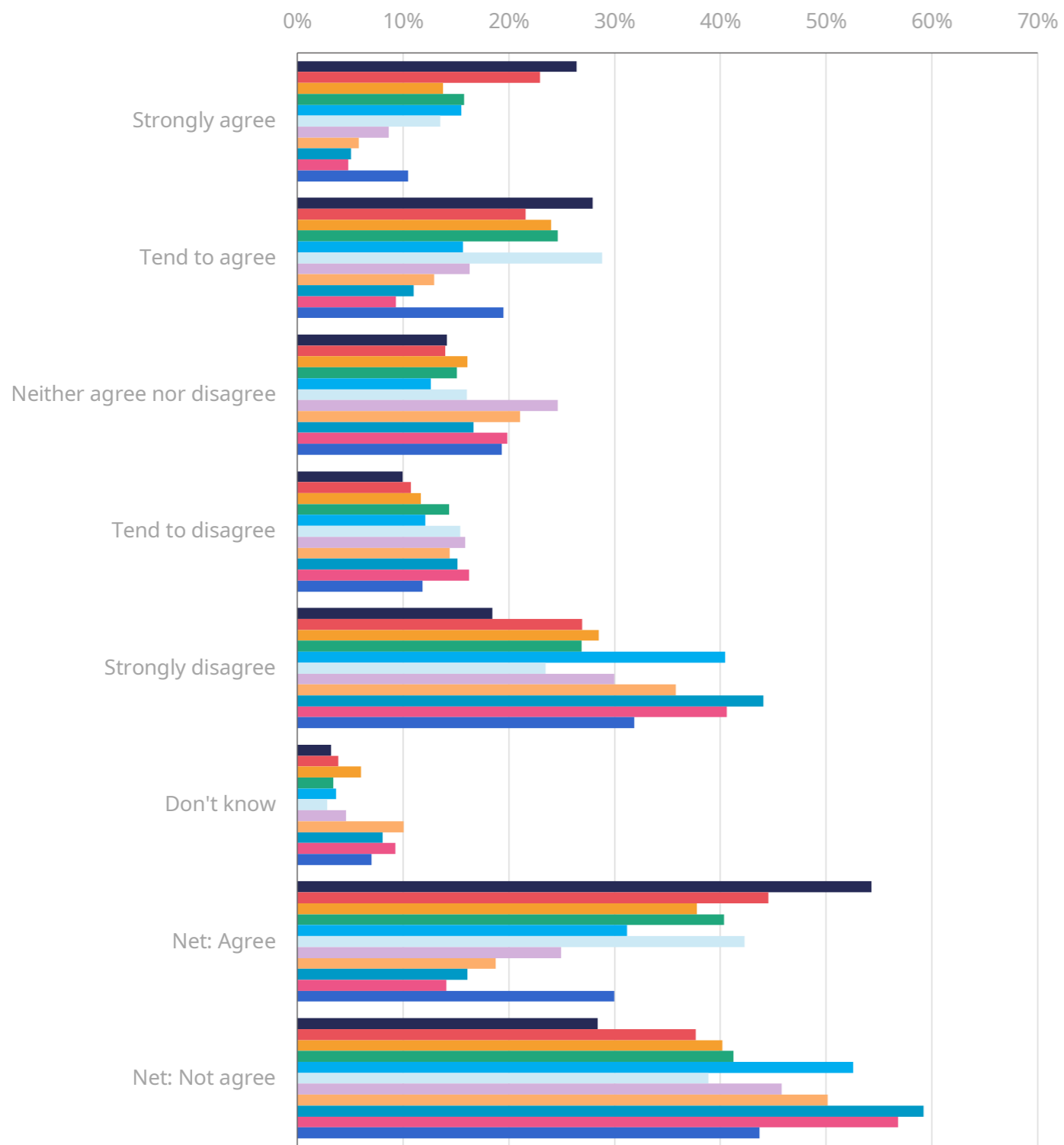
- **Gender:** Women (58%) were 7 percentage points more likely than men (51%) to experience a 'high or increased workload or volume of tasks at work - unpaid'. Women (48%) were also 6 percentage points more likely than men (41%) to 'regularly work unpaid overtime beyond their contracted hours'.
- **Region:** 42% of workers in Wales said that 'taking on additional paid work due to the cost of living crisis' had caused them stress which may have contributed to burnout in the past year - compared with 38% in England and 26% in Scotland.

The pressure of being mandated back to working from an office or fixed location was most felt in London, where 41% agreed it had caused them stress and may have contributed to burnout in the past year - 10 percentage points higher than the national average in England (31%) and higher than in Northern Ireland (30%), Scotland (29%) and Wales (21%).

54% agreed that a high or increased workload or volume of tasks at work caused them stress and may have contributed to burnout

45% agreed that regularly working unpaid overtime caused them stress and may have contributed to burnout

42% agreed that feeling isolated at work caused them stress and may have contributed to burnout



- A high or increased workload or volume of tasks at work (unpaid)
- Regularly working unpaid overtime beyond your contracted hours (e.g., completing work in your personal time)
- Taking on additional paid hours with your primary employer, or taking on additional work with another employer due to the increased cost of living (e.g., working overtime or taking on a second job)
- Fear of redundancy/job security
- Being bullied or intimidated by other colleagues at work
- Being bullied or intimidated by other colleagues at work
- Feeling isolated at work
- Working from a fixed location (i.e., based at the same office/working location)
- Field-based working (i.e., based away from home, but at a variety of locations)
- Working from home (i.e., full-time working from home)
- Hybrid or agile working (i.e., a mixture of home and location-based working)
- Being mandated to increase time spent working from a fixed or field-based location (i.e., an office or working location)



Factors outside of work

When asked about the factors in life which have caused them stress and may have contributed to burnout in the past year, the majority of working adults agreed that 'poor sleep' (64%), 'financial uncertainty due to the cost-of-living crisis' (53%), 'money worries in general' (53%), 'poor physical health' (46%) and 'feeling isolated' (43%) had done so.

A significant proportion also cited 'problems in personal relationships' (35%) and 'caring responsibilities' (34%) as factors which have caused them stress and may have contributed towards burnout in the past year.

Focussing on the top key contributing factors:

- Gender:** Women were 9 percentage points more likely than men (68% vs. 59%) to agree that 'poor sleep' had caused them stress and may have contributed to burnout in the past year. Women were also 5 percentage points more likely than men (48% vs. 44%) to agree that 'poor physical health' had caused them stress and may have contributed to burnout in the past year. Women were 7 percentage points more likely

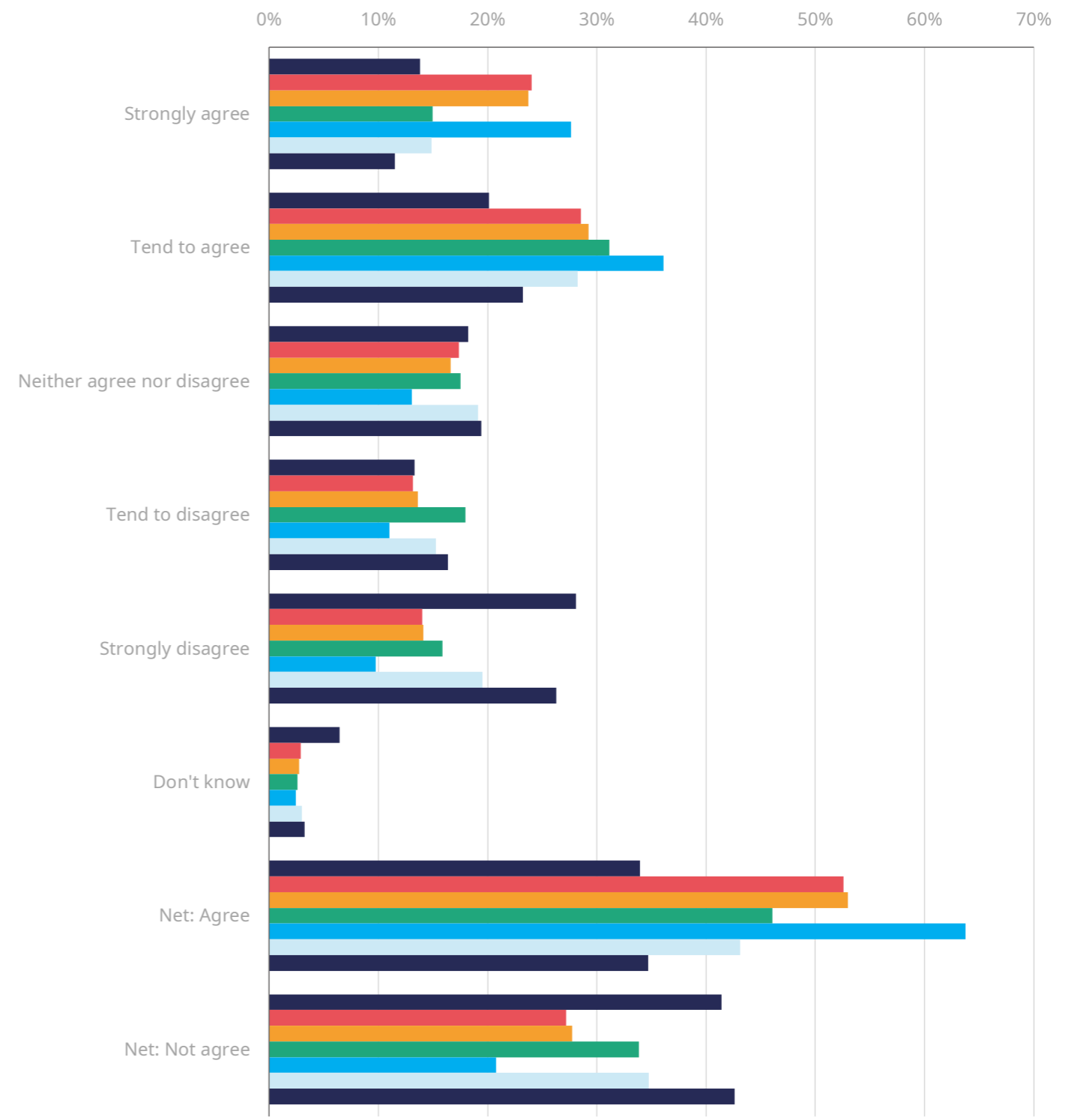
than men (56% vs. 49%) to agree that 'financial uncertainty due to the cost-of-living crisis', and 6 percentage points more likely than men (56% vs. 50%) to agree that 'money worries in general' were contributing factors.

- Age:** 74% of 45-54 year-olds agreed that 'poor sleep' had caused them stress and may have contributed to burnout in the past year – higher than any other age group and 10 percentage points higher than the national average.
- Region:** 71% of adults in the Midlands and Scotland agreed that 'poor sleep' had caused them stress and may have contributed to burnout in the past year – higher than any other regional group.

64%
agreed poor sleep caused them stress and may have contributed to burnout

53%
agreed that money worries caused them stress and may have contributed to burnout

46%
agreed that poor physical health caused them stress and may have contributed to burnout



- Caring responsibilities with work (e.g., childcare/caring for elderly relatives)
- Financial uncertainty due to the cost-of-living crisis
- Money worries (general)
- Poor physical health
- Poor sleep
- Feeling isolated
- Problems in personal relationships

Supportive factors

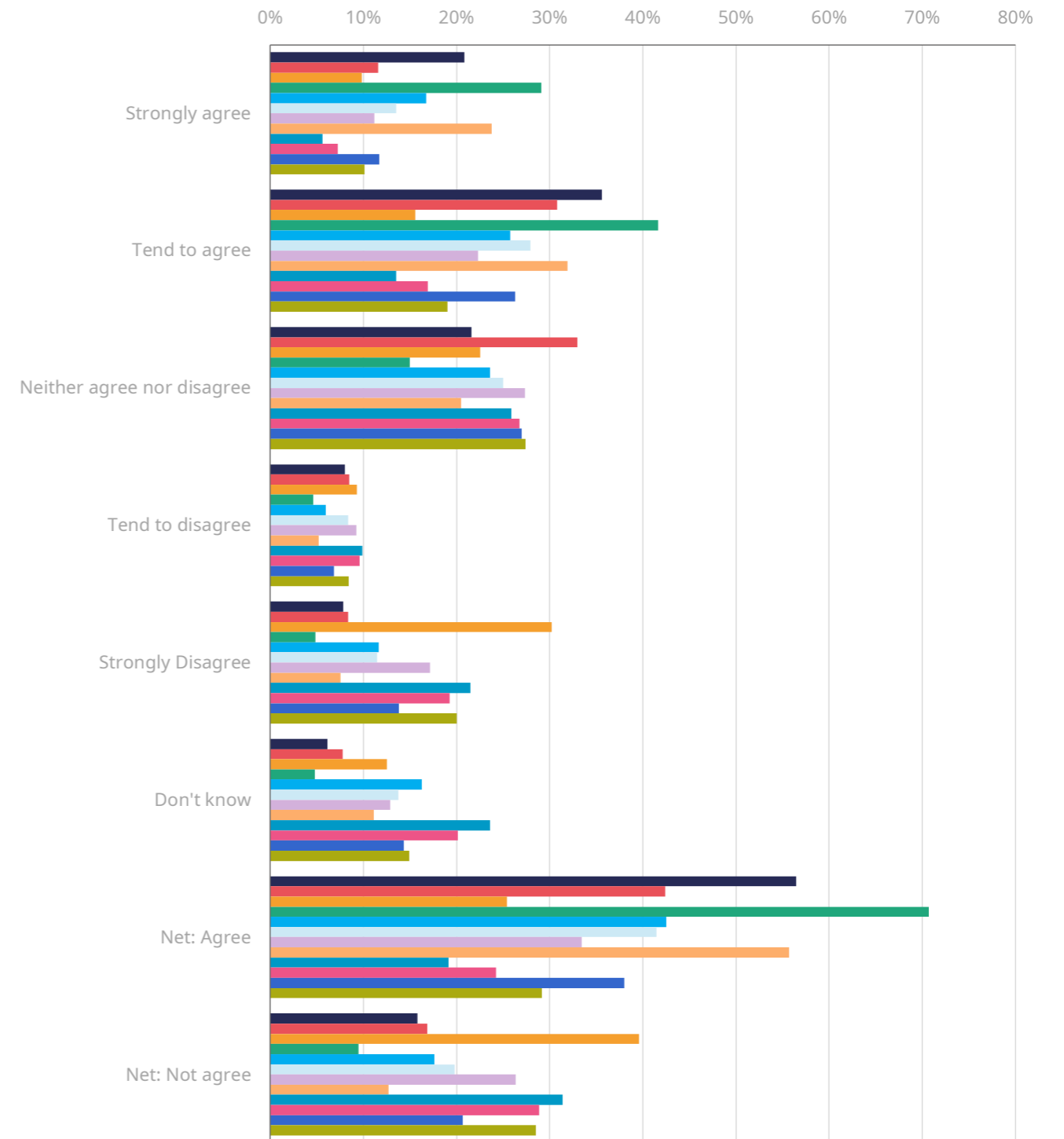
When asked about the factors which have helped to alleviate stress and prevent burnout, the majority of adults in the UK agreed that 'having a supportive network of family or friends outside of work' (71%), 'having a healthy work-life balance' (56%) and 'exercising regularly' (56%) had done so.

Meanwhile, other in-work initiatives and factors such as 'having a supportive line manager at work' (43%), 'having a supportive network of professional colleagues or peers' (42%), 'reasonable adjustments at work' (38%), 'professional support for mental health' (29%) and 'organisations offering staff training around mental health at work' (24%) were also cited as having a positive impact in adults alleviating stress and preventing burnout.

Focussing on the top key contributing factors:

- **Gender:** Women were 8 percentage points more likely than men (75% vs. 66%) to agree that 'having a supportive network of family or friends outside of work' had helped them to alleviate stress and prevent burnout.
- **Age:** 64% of adults aged 18–24 and 25–34 agreed that 'having a healthy work-life balance' had helped them to alleviate stress and prevent burnout, compared with 60% aged 35–44, 59% aged 45–54 and 47% aged 55+.

- **Working location:** 72% of those who had a 'hybrid or 'agile' working arrangement (i.e., a mixture of home and location-based working), and 68% who are 'home-based' agreed that having a healthy work-life balance' had helped them to alleviate stress and prevent burnout, compared with 67% of those working from a fixed location and 64% of those working from a field-based location.
- **Social grade:** Workers from a ABC1 social grade (63%) were 16 percentage points more comfortable than workers from a C2DE social grade (47%) to agree that having a healthy work-life balance' had helped them to alleviate stress and prevent burnout.



- Exercising regularly
- Positive changes to diet
- Medication for mental health
- Having a supportive network of family or friends outside of work
- Having a supportive line manager at work
- Having a supportive network of professional colleagues or peers (your immediate team at work, or through professional networks outside of your organisation)
- Taking time off work (e.g., sickness absence)
- Having a healthy work-life balance (e.g., taking annual leave, ensuring regular breaks and respecting boundaries around your working hours)
- My organisation has a plan in place for staff to spot signs of chronic stress and prevent burnout in employees (e.g., individual wellbeing action plans or organisation-wide stress risk assessments or formal policies)
- My organisation offers staff training around mental health at work (e.g., mental health awareness training, Mental Health First Aid, training tailored for line managers, or a network of mental health champions)
- Reasonable adjustments at work (e.g., change in working hours, responsibilities, or working hours)
- Professional support for mental health (e.g., therapy, Employee Assistance Programme, coaching or counselling)

Research overview

Methodology

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,060 adults of which 1,132 were workers. Fieldwork was undertaken between 14th–15th December 2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

Audiences

The figures represent the UK adult population. Where appropriate, select questions relating to people's current in-work experiences of burnout were filtered to just poll those in employment. To differentiate, these figures are labelled as 'UK workers' or 'workers', whereas all other figures are labelled as 'UK adults' or 'adults'.

We have also filtered data by the following demographic splits:

Age

- 18–24
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45–54
- 55+

Gender

- Male
- Female

Region

- England
- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland
- London
- Midlands
- South of England
- North of England
- East of England

Parent/guardian

- Parent/guardian
- Non-parent/guardian

Industry

- Construction
- Education
- Financial Services
- Hospitality and leisure
- IT & telecoms
- Accountancy
- Legal
- Manufacturing

- Media/marketing/advertising/PR & sales
- Medical & health services
- Real estate
- Retail
- Transportation & distribution

Ethnicity

- English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Any other White background
- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background
- African
- Caribbean
- Any other Black African/Caribbean background
- Arab
- Any other ethnic group

Social grade

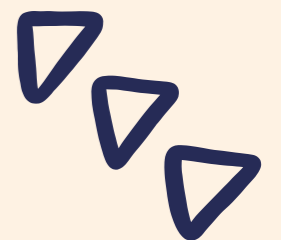
- ABC1: make up 57% of the population and are likely to hold professional or managerial positions in their jobs and have completed

higher education. They tend to have a higher income, resulting in increased access to housing and healthcare.

- C2DE: make up 43% of the population and are likely to have semi-skilled jobs and may not have completed higher education. Their incomes are typically lower than that of ABC1, and they are likelier to experience difficulties in accessing housing and healthcare.

Working status

- Working full time (30 hours or more a week)
- Working part time (8–29 hours a week)
- Working part time (less than 8 hours a week)
- Full-time student
- Retired
- Unemployed
- Not working
- Other



Recommendations

What all of us can do to minimise the risk of burnout

Preventing burnout in the workplace is a shared responsibility between employers and employees. There is a need for open dialogue about what a “good workplace” looks like in the modern world, to create the infrastructure for mentally healthy working environments.

By taking proactive steps to manage workload, prioritise wellbeing, and communicate effectively, both employees and employers can make these mutual expectations a reality and contribute to a healthier work environment.

Our research highlights how stress and burnout can affect each of us differently, and at different times of our lives. Our mental health is on a continuum, and with this in mind, it's crucial for us to know what “good mental health” looks like for us as individuals. Burnout is not just a workplace phenomenon but also exists outside of work. Times of stress at work, and outside of work, are inevitable, but knowing

what our individual triggers are, and understanding how they impact us, can help prevent challenging times escalating to burnout.

It's unsurprising that the majority of adults in the survey identified that “having a supportive network of family or friends outside of work” has helped to alleviate stress and prevent burnout. Interestingly, we can often find ourselves withdrawing from our loved ones in challenging times, which creates a vicious cycle. Keeping conversations going with those around us, and making time to spend time with others, can hugely benefit our mental health – particularly when we are struggling.

Our recommendations for employees

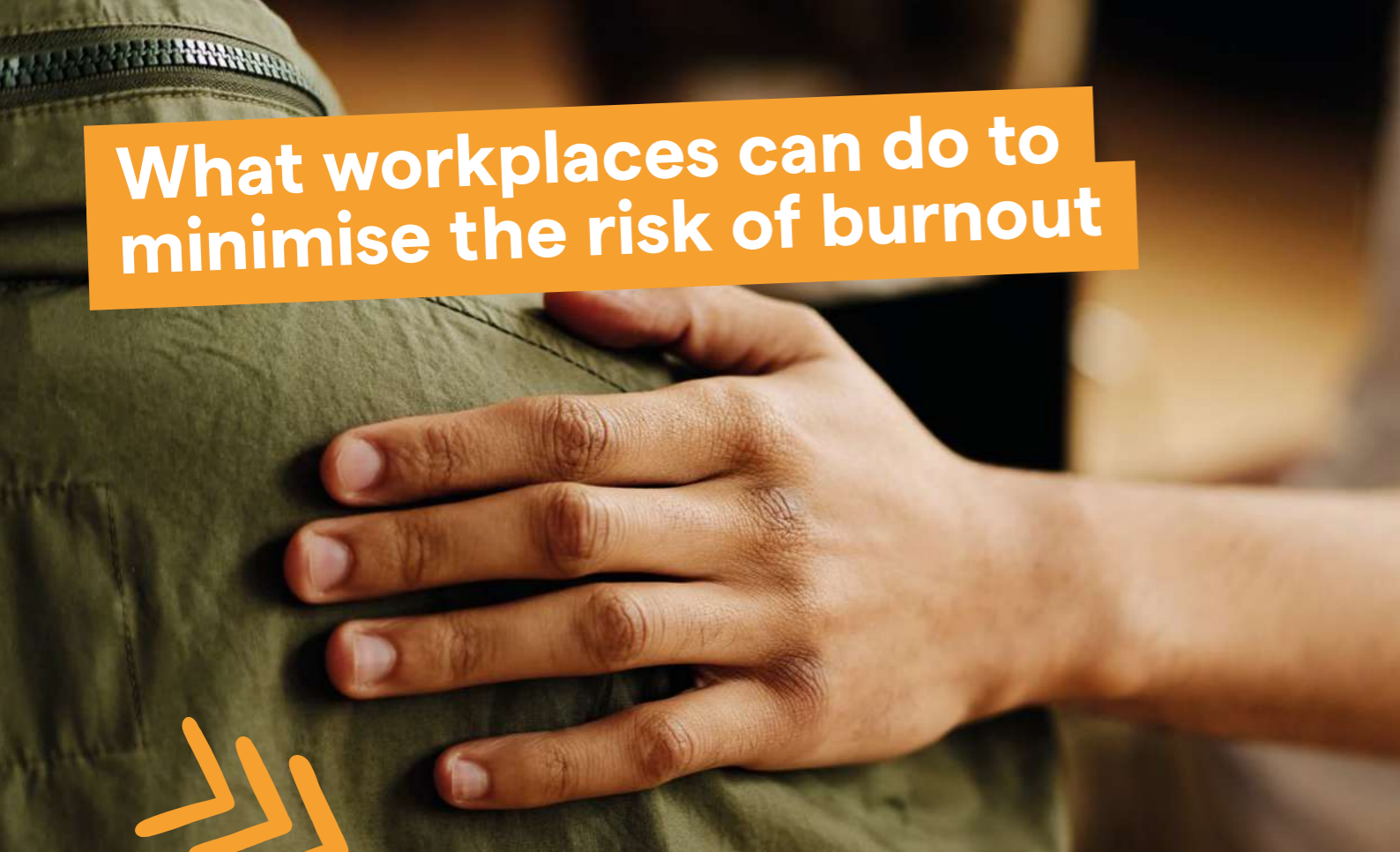
Whilst employers have a duty of care to protect their employees from harm, employees must also take responsibility for their own wellbeing to help to prevent burnout. Here are some strategies that employees should consider:

- **Using tools, such as the [Mental Health UK Stress Bucket](#)**, can help prompt a realistic perspective on what you find challenging, as well as some of the positive strategies you have learnt to manage stress levels. Once you begin to recognise these factors, it is easier to act upon them.
- **Reflect on what good mental health looks like for you at this point in your life.** Complete a Mental Health UK “[Wellness Action Plan](#)” and consider what steps need to be put into place if you or someone else recognises signs you are struggling.
- **Many workplaces offer Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) that provide counselling services.** The counselling offered may only be short-term (i.e., up to six sessions), if this is the case consider speaking to your GP for longer-term support.
- **Champion mental health in the workplace.** All of us experience stress at times, but positive role-modelling, encouraging openness, and compassion are powerful tools for creating healthy and productive workplaces.
- **Set boundaries to promote a healthy work-life balance.** Clearly define work hours and avoid regularly working beyond them. Turn off work phones and put devices out of sight outside of working hours. When faced with excessive workload or unrealistic deadlines, ascertain if there is flexibility around delivery times, and what further support would be helpful to alleviate pressure and stress.

- **Use breaks to rest and recharge during the working day.** Regularly stepping away from your desk or workspace can help to reduce stress levels. Take advantage of your allocated annual leave, and plan regular breaks and holidays to unwind.
- **Pay attention to physical and mental health,** focusing on the four pillars of health: sleep, exercise, nutrition, and stress. Engage in activities that bring joy and relaxation outside of work.
- **Discuss workload and expectations with your manager.** Be open about challenges you may be facing and seek support when needed. When possible, learn to delegate, ask for assistance, or share workload with colleagues.
- **Establish achievable, realistic goals and deadlines.** Break large projects into smaller tasks to avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- **Build a network of supportive peers at work.** Share concerns and experiences with trusted coworkers who will be able to listen and suggest constructive techniques and solutions.
- **Incorporate mindfulness techniques into your daily routine.** Take short breaks for meditation or deep breathing exercises.



What workplaces can do to minimise the risk of burnout



Employers have a duty of care to protect both the physical health and mental health of their employees. So, they need to equip themselves and their colleagues with working practices that encourage positive mental health at work.

The modern world has thrown up huge social and technological changes for society, which in turn presents employers with unrivalled challenges in protecting colleague wellbeing – but through a collaborative approach with employees, there is a way forward.

As our report demonstrates, no two individuals will react the same to stressors in the workplace, so managers must take an individualist approach to preventing burnout in the workplace. Workplaces require unique approaches because workforces encompass a complex blend of different needs, personalities, and cultures. Therefore, the role of the employer is to adapt their knowledge and understanding of their workforce, create opportunities in recognising the impact of mental health, and to encourage inclusivity and psychological safety in the workplace.

Workplaces that prioritise mental health are becoming higher on the agenda for the younger workforce, so employers need to take action to attract and retain the future workforce. Our research highlights that younger adults are more likely to speak to their manager if they were experiencing high or extreme levels of pressure and stress at work, but they are also the group that are most likely to take time off work due to poor mental health caused by pressure or stress.

There are some highly effective tools and interventions that can support workplaces to manage employee mental health. However, we must acknowledge that our workforces consist of humans, and ultimately if we expect individuals to consistently manage unrealistically high or increased workloads, then this will lead to more employees experiencing burnout.

Our recommendations for employers

- **A strategy, policy or plan for employee mental health** should be proactively implemented, and regularly reviewed, to prevent chronic stress and burnout, as well as to treat it.
- **Managers should be equipped to feel informed of workplace mental health plans**, and comfortable in supporting colleagues' mental health, whilst maintaining boundaries. Foster open communication between employees and management and consider setting up employee peer support groups.
- **Regularly check in with employees to discuss workload and challenges.** Wellbeing Plans can help to identify what good wellbeing looks like for each employee, as well as what it looks like when things aren't so good.
- **Ensure that workloads are reasonable and achievable.** Monitor workloads and redistribute tasks when necessary. Set realistic deadlines and avoid piling too much work on individuals.
- **Encourage opportunities for employees to consider their mental health**, and recognise when positive practice is identified. Managers should also promote a healthy work-life balance, encouraging employees take regular breaks and ensuring these breaks are taken, including ensuring employees use their full annual leave entitlement. Where overtime is required, employers should discourage excessive overtime and set clear expectations for what is required.
- **Senior leaders should be visible in how they maintain their own wellbeing.** This is a powerful tool in promoting mental health in the workplace, and can "give permission" to a workforce to do the same. Senior leaders and managers should maintain a healthy work-life balance and refrain from working when they are unwell.
- **Offer training sessions – such as those delivered by Mental Health UK** – to help employees and managers understand the importance of good mental health and how to maintain it, including how to have supportive conversations, and the importance of role modeling mentally healthy behaviour at work.
- **Acknowledge and appreciate employees' hard work and achievements.** Implement a fair and transparent rewards system to recognise good performance based on accomplishments but prioritising mental wellbeing over excessive work.
- **Foster a culture of care and collaboration**, encouraging team-building activities and social interactions for all staff while considering individual differences. Avoid stigmatising language around mental health and mental illness.
- **Provide and communicate confidential access to resources** such as counselling services or Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs).
- **Have robust and clearly communicated policies and procedures in place** to address workplace bullying and harassment. Promote a zero-tolerance policy for such behaviours.
- **Conduct regular assessments of workplace stressors and burnout risks.** Adjust policies and practices based on employee feedback and changing work conditions. By implementing these strategies, employers can create a healthier work environment that reduces the risk of burnout and fosters the wellbeing of their employees.

Resources and tailored support

Finding support

If you or someone you know is in urgent need of lifesaving help, please call 999 or go to your nearest Accident & Emergency (A&E) department. For non-emergency medical help call 111.

Further support can be accessed via the organisations below.

Mental Health UK

Mental Health UK works UK-wide to deliver both national and local services that enable and empower people to understand and manage their mental health in a person-centered and empathetic way. Our website has a wealth of information and resources you can use to manage your own mental health and support others with theirs.

[mentalhealth-uk.org](https://www.mentalhealth-uk.org)
info@mentalhealth-uk.org

Rethink Mental Illness

Operating in England, Rethink Mental Illness deliver services that keep people safe and well in the community, preventing their needs from escalating, supporting independent living and empowering people to know their rights and to access the support and care that they are entitled to. The Rethink Mental Illness Advice Service offers practical help on issues such as the Mental Health Act, community care and welfare benefits, living with mental illness, medication and care.

[rethink.org](https://www.rethink.org)
advice@rethink.org
0808 801 0525 (Freephone)

Change Mental Health

Working across Scotland, Change Mental Health place the individual at the heart of what they do and build the support they need to move forward with their lives. Their Advice and Support Service is open Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm, where advisers can signpost callers to local support that most fits their needs, including their own Change Mental Health services. Change Mental Health offer initial advice on money worries and help to deal with emergencies.

[changemh.org](https://www.changemh.org)
advice@changemh.org
0808 8010 515 (Freephone)

Adferiad

Adferiad is a member-led charity that provides help and support for people with mental health, addiction, and co-occurring and complex needs, to maximise their personal potential, and achieve a better quality of life. Operating across Wales, their expert staff and volunteers apply a whole person approach to help people in all areas of their lives so they can live with dignity and as independently as possible.

[adferiad.org](https://www.adferiad.org)
01492 863000 (North Wales)
01792 816600 (South Wales)

MindWise

MindWise is a leading mental health charity in Northern Ireland. Through their 30 key services, they support the recovery of 9,000 people affected by mental health issues every year, including carers, families and children. We campaign for change and fight stigma and discrimination.

[mindwisenv.org](https://www.mindwisenv.org)

Samaritans

Samaritans provides a free helpline available 24/7 for anyone needing emotional support. Whether you are struggling to cope or need someone to listen they will listen without judgement or pressure.

[samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org)
jo@samaritans.org
116 123

Shout

Providing free confidential 24/7 crisis support across the UK for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis or in need of support.

[giveusashout.org](https://www.giveusashout.org)
info@giveusashout.org
Text SHOUT to 85258

Hub of Hope

An online database of national and local mental health support. Bringing community, charity, private and NHS mental health support and services together in one place, searchable by postcode and type of support.

[hubofhope.co.uk](https://www.hubofhope.co.uk)

NHS

The NHS website contains a comprehensive A-Z guide on physical and mental health conditions, providing information on symptoms, possible treatments, medications, etc. Also provides access to your NHS account supporting you to find local services, book appointments with your GP etc.

[nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)

Your Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

Many workplaces offer Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) that provide counselling services. We suggest contacting your HR department at work to enquire about what support services they have in place, such as an EAP or other service. The counselling offered may only be short-term (i.e., up to six sessions), if this is the case consider speaking to your GP for longer-term support.

Tailored support offered by Mental Health UK's Workplace Mental Health and Training team

Mental Health UK has a dedicated workplace mental health and training team. We pride ourselves on our tailored approach to supporting mental health at work. We can work on a retainer basis in partnership with organisations, providing consultancy to ensure we understand the challenges and objectives of each organisation we work with to tailor a long-term transformational package to help create and maintain mentally healthy workplace cultures.

Our support includes:

- Mental Health Awareness training for managers
- Mental Health Champions training
- Facilitated Peer Support groups
- Therapeutic coaching
- Consultancy
- Talks and Webinars on pertinent mental health topics

[mentalhealth-uk.org/workplace-mental-health](https://www.mentalhealth-uk.org/workplace-mental-health)



Our call to the Prime Minister

Recognising the growing evidence that the UK is grappling with high levels of work absence and its subsequent cost to individuals, employers and the taxpayer, Mental Health UK is calling on the Prime Minister to convene a national summit, bringing together government ministers, employers and experts to determine how we can create healthy workplaces and best support people to stay in or return to work if they're struggling with stress and poor mental health.





Find out more

mentalhealth-uk.org/burnout

