

Managers impact mental health more than doctors and therapists says new research

2 years ago



[The Workforce Institute](#) at [UKG](#) surveyed 3,400 people across 10 countries to research mental health in workers, to spotlight the critical role that jobs, leadership, and, most of all, our managers play in supporting mental health in and outside of work.

Key Insights:

- Managers impact employees' mental health (69%) more than doctors (51%) or therapists (41%) — and even the same as a spouse or partner (69%).
- More than 80% of employees would rather have good mental health than a high-paying job.
- Two-thirds of employees would take a pay cut for a job that better supports their mental wellness — and 70% of managers would, too.
- Work stress negatively impacts employees' home life (71%), wellbeing (64%), and relationships (62%).
- 40% of the C-suite says they will likely quit within the year because of work-related stress.

“We talk a lot about mental health in terms of a medical diagnosis or burnout. While those are serious issues, the day-to-day stressors we live with — especially those caused by work — are what we should talk more about as leaders,” said UKG chief people officer Pat Wadors.

“Life isn't all milk and honey, and when leaders open up about their own struggles, they acknowledge employees are not alone, and that it's OK not to be OK. Authentic, vulnerable leadership is the key to creating belonging at work, and, in turn, the key to solving the mental health crisis in the workplace.”

At the end of work, 43% of employees are “often” or “always” exhausted, and 78% of employees say that

stress negatively impacts their work performance. That stress from work carries into our personal lives, as employees say work negatively impacts their home life (71%), wellbeing (64%), and relationships (62%).

For people who report “poor” or “very poor” mental health, around one-quarter (28%) say they lack work-life balance, compared with just 4% of people in “good” or “excellent” mental health.

While nine in 10 HR and C-suite leaders believe working for their company has a positive impact on employees’ mental health, only half of employees agree. In fact, one in three say their manager fails to recognise the impact they have on their team’s mental wellbeing, and seven in 10 would like their company and manager to do *more* to support mental health.

“The chronic anxiety that comes from working through one global crisis after another is wearing on employees,” said UKG The Workforce Institute executive director Dr. Jarik Conrad. “[Being overwhelmed consumes human energy](#) and impacts retention, performance, innovation, and culture. Employers can be the anchor of stability for their people by giving them the support and resources they need — not just what we *think* they need.”

Forty per cent of employees are “often” or “always” stressed about work, but 38% say they “rarely” or “never” talk with their manager about their workload. Yet, research shows that managers and C-level leaders carry much of the same burdens as their people — sometimes more.

Managers are more often stressed out than their team members and senior leadership (42% vs. 40% and 35%, respectively), and 25% say they are “often” or “always” feeling burned out.

The C-suite is not immune to challenges, either. A surprising 33% of C-level leaders say, “I don’t want to work anymore,” and the younger the leader, the more they agree with that statement. In fact, a whopping 40% of the C-suite says they will likely quit in the next 12 months due to work-related stress.

“My top advice for companies when it comes to mental health: Don’t leave your leaders behind,” said Dan Schawbel, managing partner at Workplace Intelligence.

“Sometimes, it’s hard to muster compassion for the C-suite because they make good money, yet many fail to account for all the pressures they’re faced with, including being responsible for the wellbeing of sometimes thousands of employees. We’re all human, and, to lead well, you first need to put your own mask on before helping others.”

Read the full report, [Mental Health at Work: Managers and Money](#) for additional insights and recommendations for building empathy, authenticity, active listening, and a growth mindset to create a sense of belonging, inclusion, and positive mental health in the workplace.