

ISS research indicates over half of workers feel unable to express opinions freely

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A new public opinion survey about 'Belonging in the Workplace' conducted by Opinium on behalf of [ISS A/S](#), a workplace experience and facilities management company, shows that workers' feelings are linked to decreased productivity, worsened mental health and an increased risk of employee turnover. The results confirm the importance of creating a safe and positive workplace culture that should be integrated into every workplace decision, process and solution, says Corinna Refsgaard, Group Chief People & Culture Officer at ISS.

The survey of 4,500 workers across the five countries shows that while 69% of respondents 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that they have a sense of belonging at their workplace, half of them (51%) also cited feelings of not being able to share their opinions freely in the workplace at least some of the time over the last 12 months. Almost half (46%) of respondents also noted that they did not feel respected or treated fairly by colleagues or management at least some of the time.

In addition, people across the countries cited that they frequently ('most of' or 'all of the time') were not able to share opinions freely in the workplace

(15%) and were not treated fairly or respected (13%). They also reported high levels of frequently not feeling aligned with the values of their organisations (14%).

Of those who have had these feelings, one-fourth (25%) linked this directly to worsened mental health (such as anxiety or depression) and/or worse personal well-being (25%). Other most frequent consequences were considerations of changing job/workplace (35%) and working less hard than one would normally do (29%).

Encouragingly, the survey also found that the majority of respondents (78%) believe that creating a sense of belonging among employees is a priority for the employer. To enhance the sense of belonging even further, respondents suggest that employers should, among other things, provide more flexibility in terms of working hours and remote work, support more freedom of opinion, and provide more socialising opportunities.

Corinna Refsgaard, Group Chief People & Culture Officer at ISS, said:

“The results confirm that creating a positive workplace culture where everybody feels safe is not a one-off activity. It requires constant consideration and should play a major role in every workplace decision, process and solution. While a majority of the people we have surveyed express a sense of belonging, we also observe a high number who have had negative experiences at work – experiences directly linked to worsened mental health and lower productivity. Dealing with this is critical for both individuals and businesses. The good thing is that there is much more we can do to increase psychological safety and well-being in the workplace.”

Corinna added:

“There is no “one-size fits all” solution. However, it is important that actions are specific and measurable and – most importantly – embedded across the entire leadership team and organisation. Our survey points to several actions that employers could consider. These include increasing flexible working conditions, promoting an open feedback culture, facilitating socialising opportunities, and thoughtful workplace design. Placing people at the core is crucial when aiming to create a sense of belonging and creating a strong company culture. And above all, it is paramount to maintain an ongoing and engaging dialogue on this topic, as fostering a sense of belonging is a dynamic and continuous process.”