

Workplace conflict puts strain on job quality for estimated eight million UK workers

2 years ago



People who experience conflict in the workplace have lower job satisfaction and are more likely to experience poorer mental and physical health, according to the [CIPD](#) Good Work Index 2024.

The CIPD's latest report showed a quarter (25%) of UK employees – an estimated eight million people* – have experienced workplace conflict in the past year. Among those who reported at least one form of conflict, the most common forms were: being undermined or humiliated at work (48%), being shouted at or having a heated argument (35%), verbal abuse or insult (34%) or discriminatory behaviour (20%).

In response, the CIPD is calling for employers to focus on line management training and address the underlying causes of conflict, such as poor management practices and excessive workloads. Good quality people management practices are critical in creating supportive and inclusive work environments, where conflict can be reduced or resolved where it does occur.

The CIPD Good Work Index surveys over 5000 UK workers to provide an annual benchmark of good work in the UK. It measures a wide range of job quality aspects, including the day-to-day experiences of workers and the impact of work on health and wellbeing.

This latest survey found only half (54%) of those who reported conflict were satisfied with their job, compared with 77% of those who didn't experience any conflict. It's twice as common for employees who experienced conflict to say they are likely to leave their job in the next 12 months (33%) compared to those who did not report conflict (16%).

Those who experienced conflict also had less confidence in senior leaders' ability, less trust in them to act with integrity, and lower perceptions of managers to enable employee voice, highlighting the crucial importance of early action to address conflict at work.

Jake Young, senior adviser for employee experience, OD and L&D at the CIPD, the professional body for HR and people development, said:

“While a healthy level of discussion and debate in a workplace can be valuable, our survey suggests that workplace conflict is often much more than this, harming the job satisfaction and wellbeing of far too many.

“Line management training should be a priority for employers, so managers can foster more positive relationships in their teams and address any conflict early on, before it has a chance to escalate. It’s also important to pinpoint and address the underlying causes of conflict, including excessive workloads, exhaustion and pressure.”

According to the CIPD Good Work Index, of those who experienced workplace conflict in the past 12 months:

- 42% said they always or often felt exhausted, compared with 18% of those who reported no conflict, while 37% said they always or often felt under pressure, compared with 15% of those who didn’t experience any conflict.
- Only 28% said their work had positively impacted their mental health, compared with 43% per cent of those who didn’t experience conflict. A quarter (25%) said their work had a positive impact on their physical health, compared with 32% of those who didn’t experience any conflict.
- Employees’ most common response to conflict was to simply “let it go” (47%), followed by having a discussion with a manager and/or HR (29%), informal discussions, either with someone outside work such as family or friends (21%) or with the other person involved (17%). Very few (1%) took the case to an employment tribunal.

The survey highlights the worrying impact of workplace conflict on overall job quality, and in almost half of cases, employees choosing not to escalate or discuss conflict with others to resolve it.

Young continued:

“Our findings show that when conflict does happen, a lot of it is simply let go, which may suggest a lack of confidence in senior staff to address these issues constructively. And so the cycle of conflict stands to continue. Managers and senior leaders should encourage open and supportive work environments, where employees feel they have a voice and line managers feel empowered to have difficult conversations through effective training.”

[Read the report](#)