

Silent Workplace Stress Driving Employees Away from Managers, Survey Finds

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Employees are significantly more likely to discuss workplace stress with partners and friends than with managers or senior leaders, according to findings from the [Workplace Silent Stress Survey 2025](#).

The results suggest many workplaces still lack the psychological safety needed for employees to raise stress related concerns openly, creating what experts describe as a “silent stress” problem that can quietly damage wellbeing, productivity and workplace culture.

The survey found that 43.6% of employees speak to their partner about work related stress, while 12.8% turn to friends for support. By comparison, only 4.7% discuss stress with their manager and just 1.3% raise concerns with senior leadership.

Within workplace settings, employees were most likely to confide in colleagues at a similar level, with 20.3% saying they would speak to someone on their own team.

The findings point to a wider cultural issue where employees may fear reputational damage or negative career consequences if they acknowledge stress at work. According to the survey, more than half of respondents believed speaking openly about stress could change how others viewed them or lead to questions about their capability to do their job.

Stress affecting performance and retention

The research highlights the operational impact of unaddressed workplace stress.

Nearly two thirds of respondents, 63.2%, said they had considered leaving their job due to stress. More than half, 52.6%, admitted stress had caused mistakes at work, while 32.9% reported clashes with colleagues.

Additional findings showed that 27.8% had called in sick because of stress and 27.5% said it had caused them to miss deadlines.

The report warns that the consequences extend far beyond individual wellbeing, affecting productivity, collaboration, engagement and staff retention across organisations.

Impact extending beyond the workplace

The survey also found that workplace stress regularly spills into employees' personal lives, affecting sleep, relationships and wider wellbeing.

Researchers compared the impact of silent stress to a slow puncture, gradually eroding stability and performance until more serious issues emerge.

The report argues that while family and friends can provide emotional support, they are not in a position to address the underlying workplace causes of stress such as workload pressures, poor communication or organisational culture.

Leadership training seen as key to change

The findings have prompted renewed calls for organisations to strengthen leadership training and prioritise psychological safety within workplace culture.

The report highlights the role managers play in recognising and responding to stress before it escalates. It points to leadership and wellbeing training as a way to help managers build confidence in supporting employee mental health and creating more open communication.

Suggested approaches include behavioural safety training, occupational health and wellbeing programmes, stress management tools and mental health awareness initiatives.

The report concludes that silent stress should not be viewed as an individual issue but as a broader cultural warning sign.

“When employees turn to friends instead of managers, it highlights a communication breakdown that can ripple through your organisation and beyond,” the report states.