



Index Insights 2020/21

Contents

3	Foreword
5	Executive summary
7	Participation: organisations
8	Participation: employees
10	Overall mental health and wellbeing
12	Culture and engagement
13	Promotion of workplace wellbeing
14	Building awareness, knowledge, and skills
16	People management
18	Employee support tools
20	Conclusion



Foreword

Whether on the frontline, working from home, or on furlough, the world of work fundamentally changed for us all in 2020 due to the pandemic. And many of us have also faced additional stresses, including experiences relating to our race, gender, balancing caring responsibilities with work, or managing a health problem during this time.

Employers continue to face significant challenges in effectively supporting the wellbeing of all their people in such an uncertain and changing context.

Now in its fifth year, our Workplace Wellbeing Index is a benchmark of best policy and practice for supporting mental health at work. This year, 42,036 staff from 114 organisations across the UK took part. This report brings together insights on how workplace wellbeing across a diverse range of employers has been affected during this unprecedented period. In addition to exploring key themes across all organisations who took part in this year's Index, we have also highlighted interesting year-on-year comparisons for organisations that participated in the Index in both 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Overall, I am very encouraged by the ways in which employers are rising to the challenge of supporting the mental health of their people. More than 77 per cent of employees felt their employer encourages

openness and discussion about mental health and 85 per cent reported that their employer runs initiatives to raise awareness of mental health. Within organisations that took part in both the 2019/20 and 2020/21 Index cycles, there were also significant improvements in these areas year-on-year.

However, we still have a way to go. Only 58 per cent of those who experienced poor mental health while working at their current employer felt confident they would be supported if they disclosed this to their employer. And 46 per cent of people who did disclose their mental health problem to their employer felt that their situation stayed the same afterwards. Furthermore, while more people are using the mental health support tools offered by their employer compared to last year, fewer people thought they were effective. Therefore, employers need to strengthen their approach to creating an open and supportive culture alongside ensuring the support available to staff is helpful.



While some look forward to returning to a more normal world of work as the pandemic eases, we must remain mindful of the challenges still ahead. Many people will continue to work from home, at least part-time. Employers will need to find effective ways to remotely support the mental health of their employees long-term, while recognising that a diverse workforce will require a range of wellbeing support tools to perform at its best. Additionally, we are yet to realise the full mental health impact of the pandemic, especially for those working on the frontline, so employers will need to be alert and responsive to that.

I see this as a time of opportunity to work with employers to put their people's mental health at the heart of building back better. It is encouraging to see that organisations who have returned to take part in the Index again have achieved significant improvements over time, and I look forward to supporting more organisations to be part of this transformation.

Emma Mamo
Head of Workplace Wellbeing



Executive summary

The Index 2020/21 assessed over 42,000 staff from 114 organisations across 19 industries in England and Wales.

Just over half of respondents have experienced poor mental health while working for their current employer. Half (50 per cent) have experienced anxiety on multiple occasions in the past month.

Of those who experience poor mental health, just over half (55 per cent) disclosed this to their employer.

The results suggest that as an organisation, you can expect that around half of your employees have at some point, or even in the last month, experienced poor mental health such as anxiety. If you have a system in place for tracking the number of staff reporting poor mental health, based on the figures above, you can assume the actual number is probably around double the amount you are aware of.

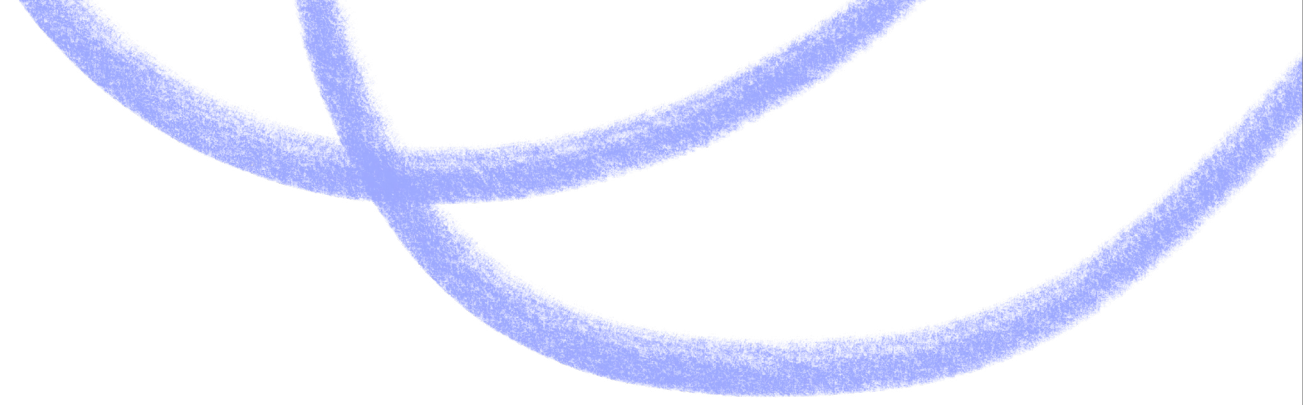
Results related to the wellbeing culture in organisations are positive. Most respondents (71 per cent) felt their organisation supports their mental health overall, up 15 per cent from 2019/20. Additionally, most (77 per cent) felt that their employer encourages openness and discussion around mental health, up 14 per cent from 2019/20.

While these results are promising, we must still remember that although the proportions feeling unsupported may be low in comparison (for example 9 per cent feeling unsupported), they still represent large numbers of people (in this case over 3,700) whose personal experience is negative and who should not be discounted.

Just over 8 in 10 respondents (85 per cent) say their organisation is running initiatives to raise awareness of mental health. At the same time, 1 in 5 people (19 per cent) disagree or strongly disagree that their workload is manageable and 14 per cent are working 50 or more hours a week.

While raising knowledge and awareness of mental health is an essential step in creating positive mental health and wellbeing at work, initiatives may be of limited impact if they don't directly acknowledge and address fundamental issues such as excessive work demands.

Awareness and confidence around mental health is high. Seventy per cent of respondents are confident looking after their own mental health and 81 per cent of managers are confident supporting a member of staff who is experiencing poor mental health at work.



In many cases though, this confidence is developed outside of work. Around half (54 per cent) said that their employer had developed their skills to support themselves and only 2 in 5 (40 per cent) said their employer had developed their skills to support a colleague. Organisations could therefore be doing more to ensure a consistent level of quality mental health training for all employees.

Management consistently comes out in our analyses as a primary source of either poor and good mental health and line managers are most commonly the first people at work those experiencing poor mental health turn to. Two thirds (66 per cent) say that their manager supports their mental health and just under that (61 per cent) say their manager understands their problems. Two in five (41 per cent) say their manager encourages feedback on their management style.

Creating opportunities for discussions about management style, such as in regular one-to-ones, would provide a better understanding of communication needs and preferences and the basis for better and more supportive relationships between managers and the staff they oversee.

Half of employees said they would feel uncomfortable disclosing poor mental health. Just under 3 in 5 (58 per cent) were confident their employer would

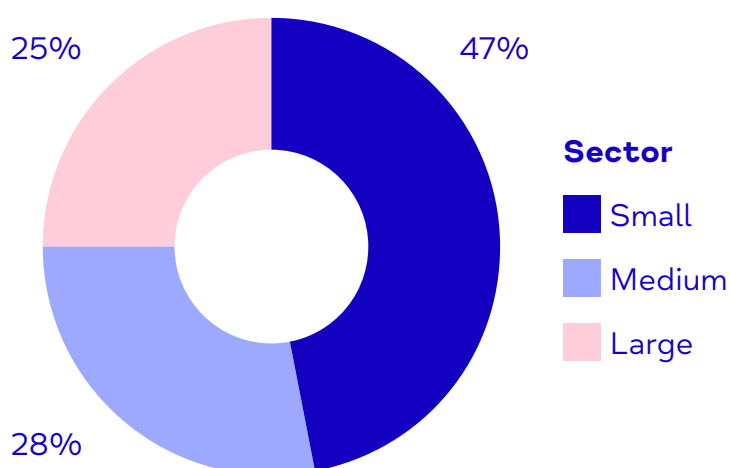
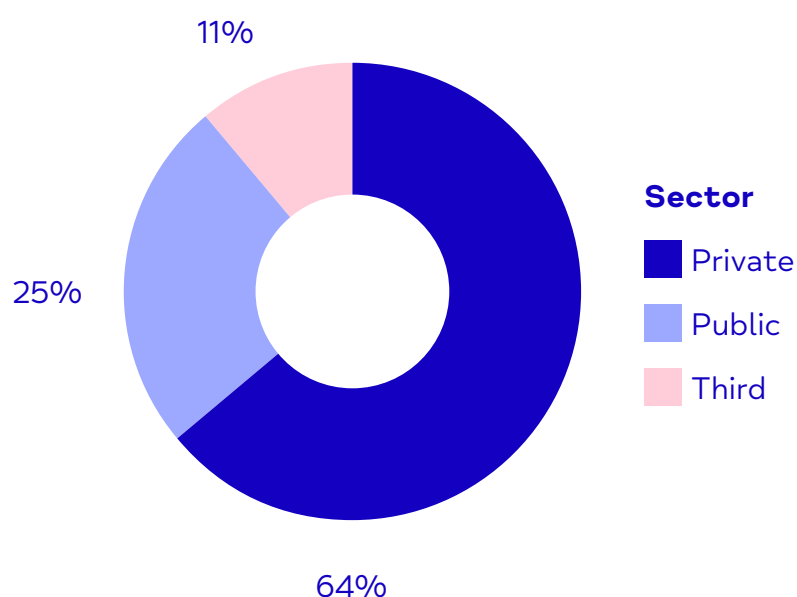
support them. Reasons given suggest that it's not that those experiencing poor mental health don't know who to talk to (only 9 per cent gave this as a reason), it's that they didn't feel comfortable talking about it, don't want sympathy, and are worried people might think they couldn't do their job properly. There is still some way to go therefore to reduce the stigma associated with poor mental health.

A very high proportion of respondents are aware of their organisation's support tools (83 per cent) but only half (49 per cent) used them. Those who did use support tools were likely to find them effective (72 per cent), although still 1 in 5 (19 per cent) did not. Just under half of those who disclosed poor mental health (46 per cent) said their situation stayed the same after doing so. While many organisations are providing support tools in some way, there appears to be more work to do to ensure that those who need support can be confident that the support on offer will be what they need.

Overall, the results are generally positive. While there are some areas for improvement, the results from clients that regularly take part in the Index show that improvements are being made in organisations that commit to better mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.

Participation: organisations

One hundred and fourteen organisations took part in the Workplace Wellbeing Index in 2020/21. A summary of the types of organisations that took part is presented below:



Organisations took part from across 19 industries from education to wholesale and retail trade.

The top 3 industries taking part in the Index 2020/21 were:

Finance and insurance
(16 organisations)

Education
(14 organisations)

Human health and social work activities
(10 organisations)

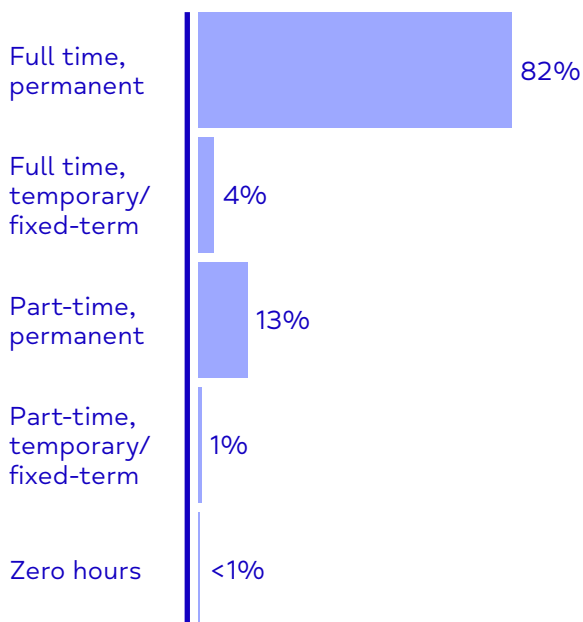
Participation: employees

Over 42,000 employees took part in the Workplace Wellbeing Index 2020/21. The majority of respondents were full time employees (82 per cent), had worked 3 or more years at their organisation (68 per cent), and were aged between 25 and 54 (70 per cent).

Thirty-three per cent (13,822 respondents) were line managers, providing us with perspectives on how confident and supported managers felt to support the mental health and wellbeing of their staff at this crucial time.

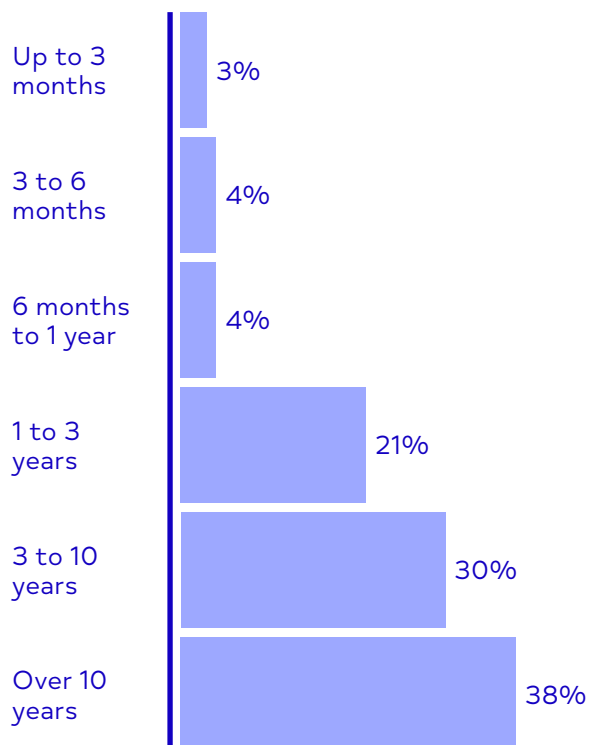
Contract type

Based on 41,897 total responses.



Length of service

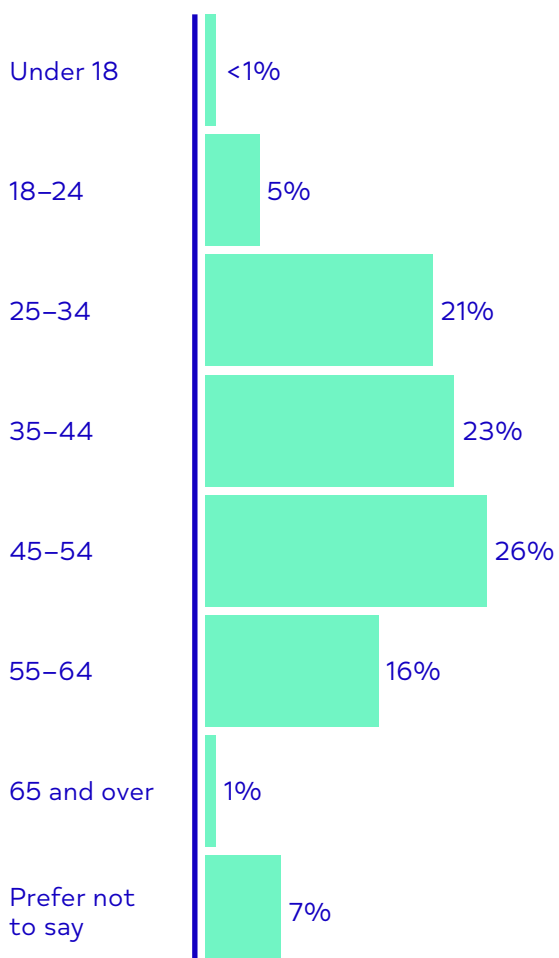
Based on 41,847 total responses.





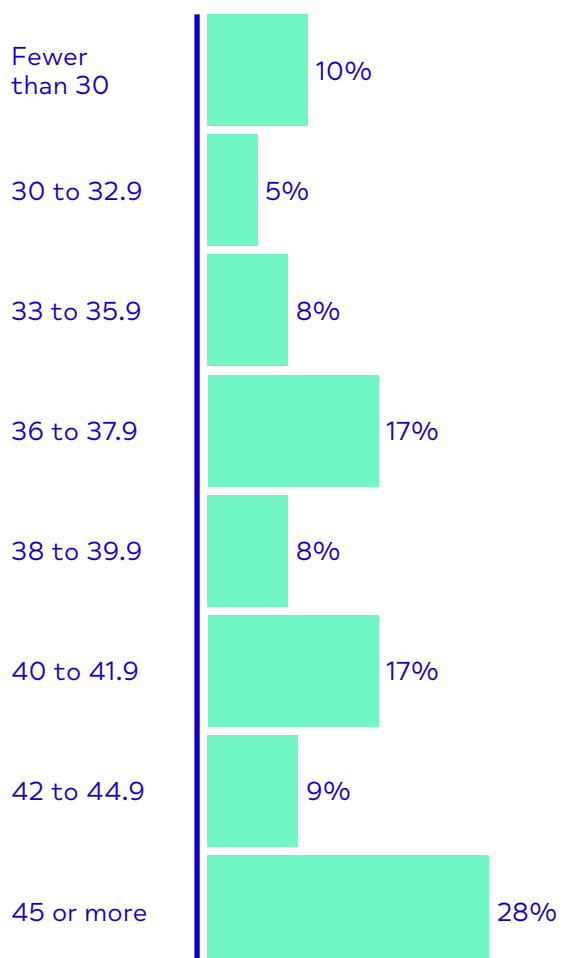
Age

Based on 41,381 total responses.



Hours worked

Based on 41,897 total responses.

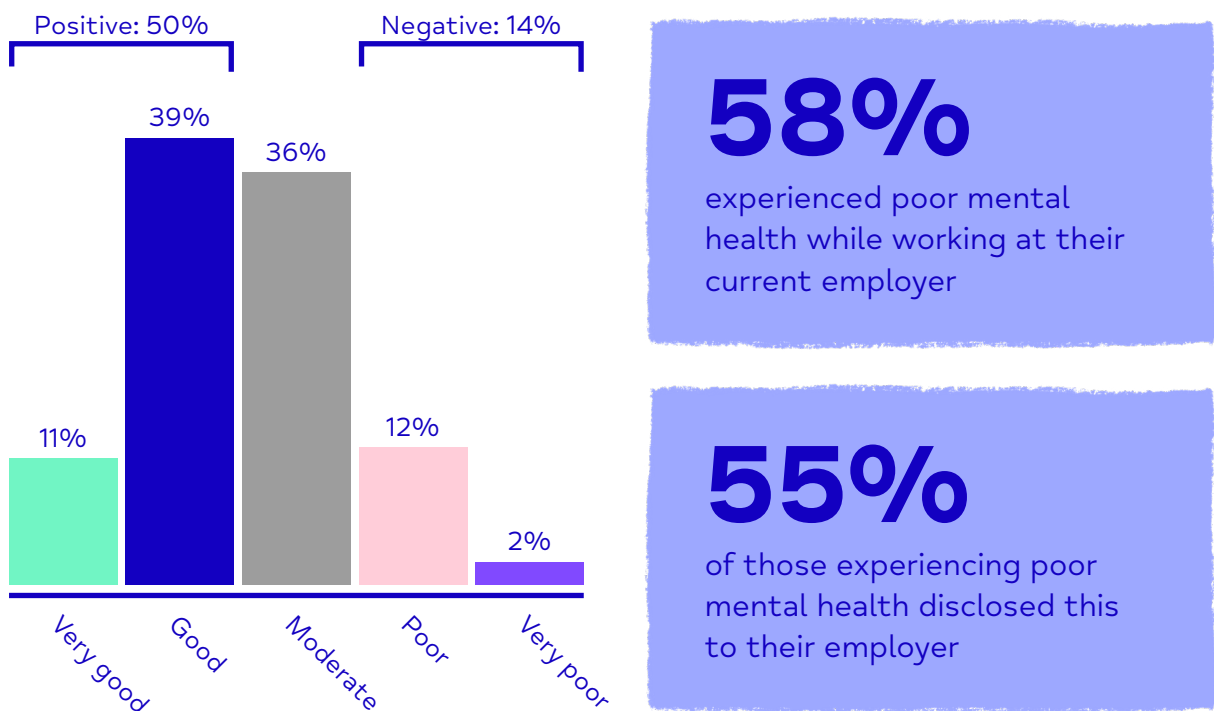


Overall mental health and wellbeing

In this area of the assessment, we ask employees about their overall mental health and wellbeing, both recently and since they have been working for their employer. This section provides an overview of the mental health and wellbeing for all employees who took part in the Index.

How would you rate your current mental health?

Based on 42,036 total responses.



Focus on overall mental health

Of those who experienced poor mental health, **35 per cent** had taken time off work because of it.

Of these, **27 per cent** told their employer it was for a reason other than their mental health.

This shows there is still more to be done to create an open culture and reduce the stigma around mental health in the workplace.

How does poor mental health affect you at work?

Based on 28,830 total responses.



61%

generally happy
at work in the last
month

50%

anxious on
multiple occasions
in the last month

Index journey

Despite the pandemic, we did not see a large change in employee self-reported mental health within returning Index organisations. Organisations who took part in the Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index 2019/20 showed **4 per cent fewer** employees rating their current mental health as very good or good in 2020/21, matched by a **4 per cent increase** in the 'moderate' category.

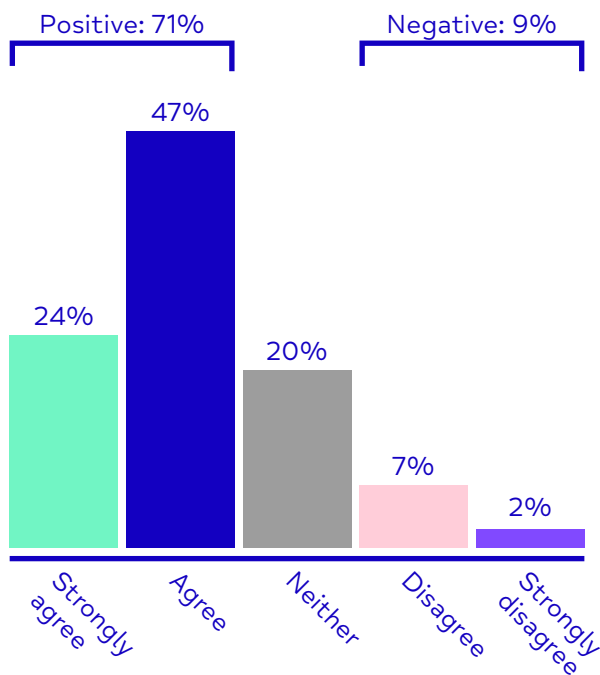
Although this is a negative change, our mental health is affected by factors in and out of work, and considering the events of 2020 it is positive to see that there was not any increase in those rating their mental health as very poor or poor.

Culture and engagement

In this area of assessment, we look at the workplace culture, which is influenced by HR approaches to mental health and wellbeing and how these influence attitudes and behaviour throughout the organisation.

“My organisation supports my mental health”

Based on 41,796 total responses.



60%

felt motivated by their workplace culture

77%

felt their employer encourages openness and discussion around mental health

Index journey

Organisations who took part in our Workplace Wellbeing Index in 2019/20 showed **an overall increase of 14 per cent** this year in the proportion who felt their employer encourages openness and discussion around mental health.

Over the same period, these organisations also showed **an overall increase of 15 per cent** this year in the proportion of employees who felt their organisation supports their mental health.

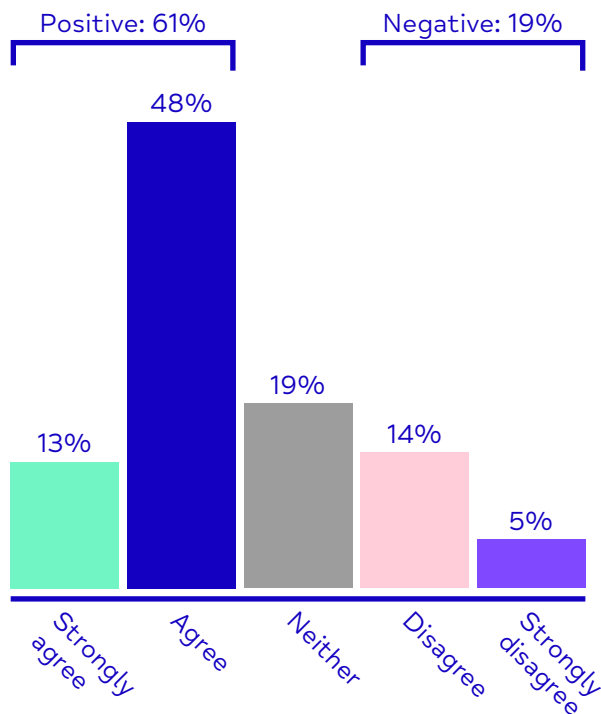
This shows how sustained efforts towards making wellbeing a priority can change the workplace culture and improve employee-employer relationships.

Promotion of workplace wellbeing

In this area of assessment, we looked at the measures and initiatives employers had in place to promote mental health and wellbeing, ranging from managing workload to providing mental health awareness training and resources.

“My workload is manageable”

Based on 41,719 total responses.



85%

felt their employer runs initiatives to raise awareness of mental health

14%

working 50 or more hours a week

Index journey

Organisations who took part in our Workplace Wellbeing Index in 2019/20 showed an **overall increase of 9 per cent** this year in the proportion of employees who felt their employer runs initiatives to raise awareness of mental health.

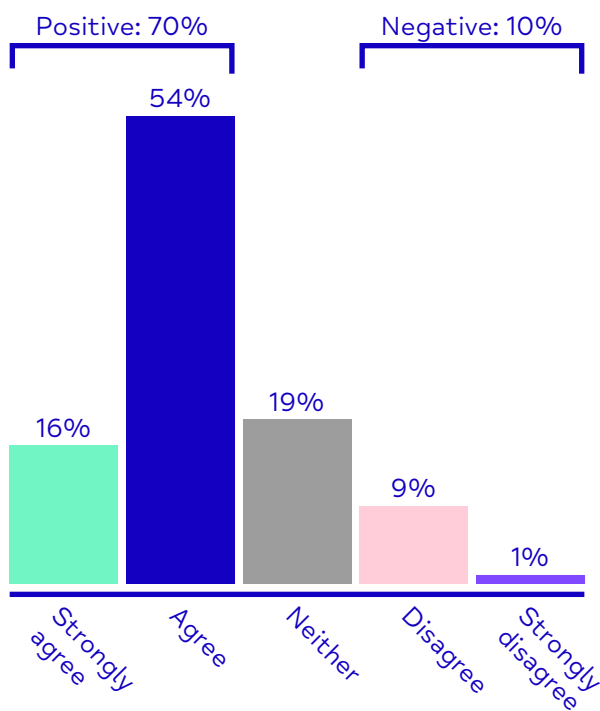
The results show that organisations are doing more activities related to mental health and wellbeing, however initiatives directly related to reducing excessive workload are less common.

Building awareness, knowledge, and skills

In this area of assessment, we looked at how organisations support employees to increase their knowledge and skills to promote awareness and understanding of mental health.

“I’m confident looking after my own mental health”

Based on 41,367 total responses.



69%

felt staff at their organisation have good awareness and knowledge of mental health

81%

of line managers felt they had the confidence to support staff experiencing poor mental health

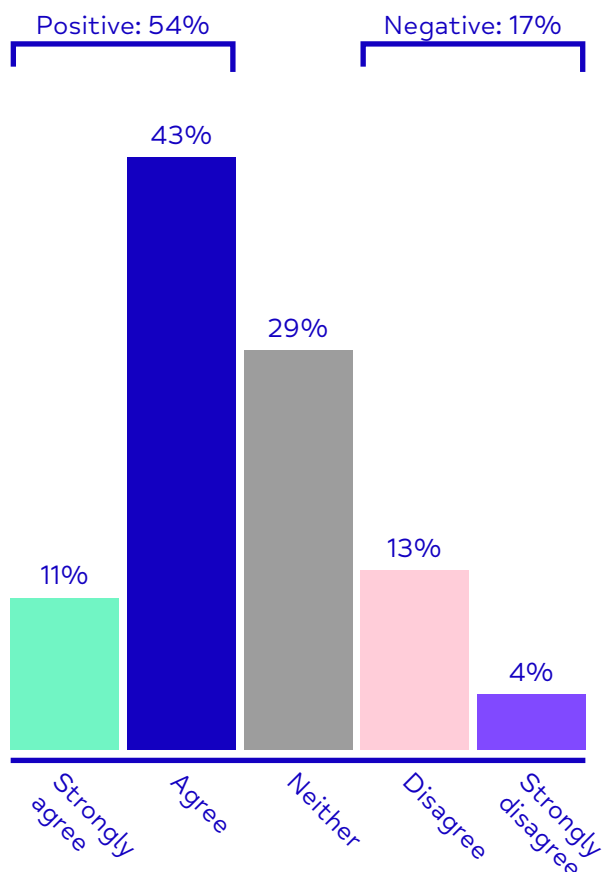
Focus on confidence

Those who said their employer improved their understanding of how to look after their mental health were more likely to see their situation improve after experiencing poor mental health (**41 per cent** saying it improved) compared to those whose employer had not improved their understanding (**13 per cent** saying it improved).

This demonstrates how training on mental health and wellbeing can potentially reduce the duration and impact of periods of poor mental health at work for employees.

“My employer developed my understanding of how to look after my mental health”

Based on 41,192 total responses.



40%

felt their employer had developed their skills to support a colleague experiencing poor mental health

56%

of line managers felt their employer had developed their skills to support staff experiencing poor mental health

Index journey

Organisations who took part in our Workplace Wellbeing Index in 2019/20 showed an **overall increase of 19 per cent** this year in the proportion of employees who felt their employer had developed their skills to look after their own mental health.

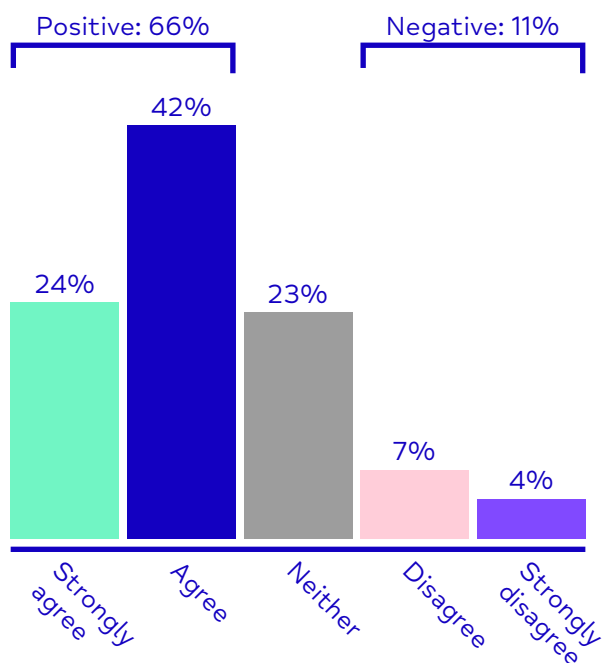
These organisations also showed an **overall increase of 14 per cent** this year in the proportion of employees who felt staff at their organisation had good awareness and knowledge of mental health.

People management

In this area of assessment we looked at the role managers have to play in workplace wellbeing.

“My manager supports my mental health”

Based on 41,228 total responses.



67%

said their manager
regularly checks in on
how they are feeling

61%

felt their manager
understands their problems

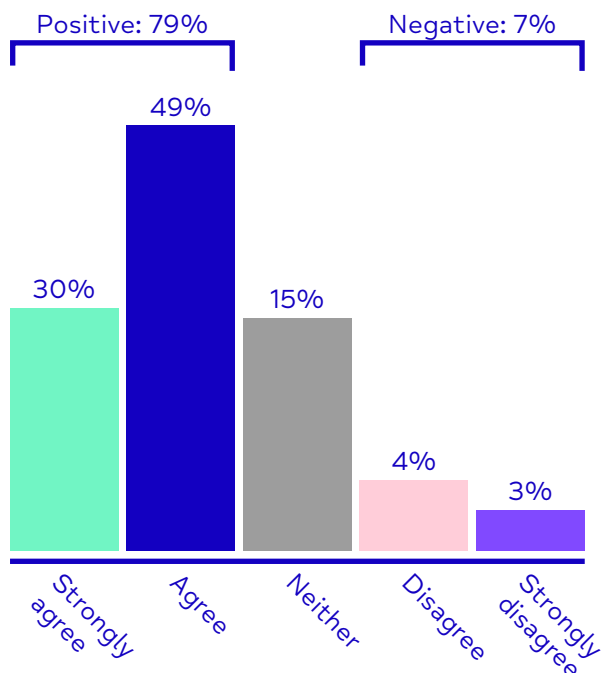
Focus on managers

Of those who said their manager does not support their mental health, **72 per cent** had experienced anxiety on multiple occasions in the past month. This is **28 per cent higher** than the proportion of those who felt their manager does support their mental health.

This is just one example of how important the role of the manager is in the mental health and wellbeing of employees.

“My relationship with my manager is effective”

Based on 41,166 total responses.



71%

felt their manager takes responsibility for their actions

41%

said their manager encourages them to give feedback on their management style

Index journey

Organisations who took part in our Workplace Wellbeing Index in 2019/20 showed an **overall increase of 9 per cent** this year in the proportion of employees who felt their manager supports their mental health.

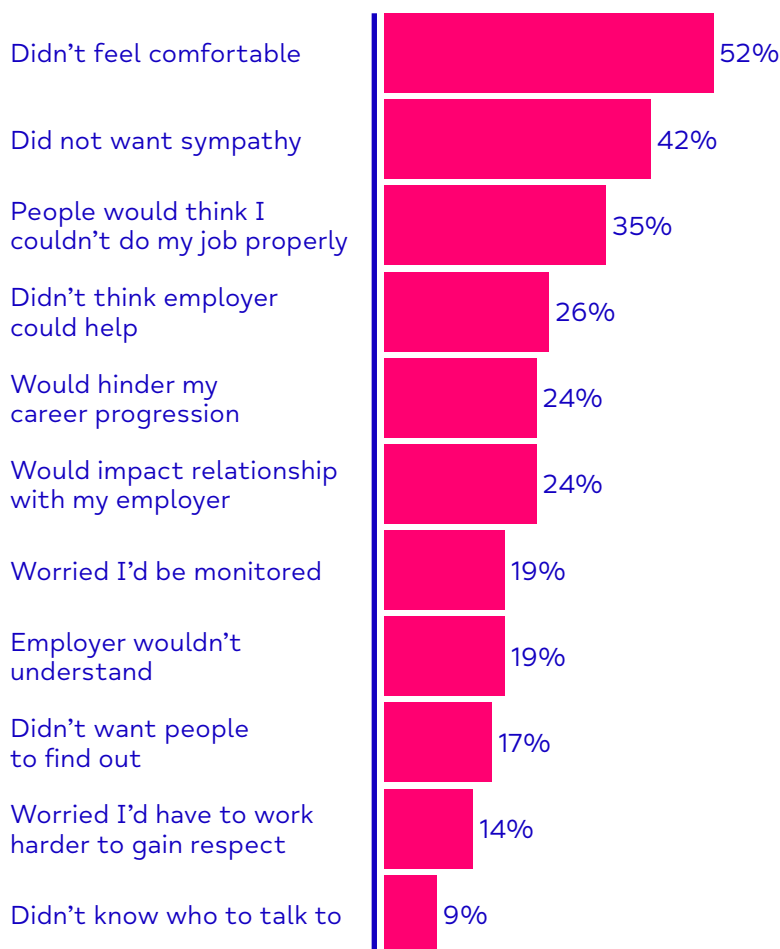
This is a very positive change, as we frequently see from both our survey data and staff interviews that managers play a vital role in employee mental health and experience.

Employee support tools

In this area of assessment we looked more closely at the wellbeing support provided, including whether staff felt that they were able to make use of support tools and, if so, whether or not they were effective.

Reasons for not disclosing poor mental health

Based on 11,023 total responses.



58%

of those who had experienced poor mental health at work felt confident their employer would support them

51%

would feel uncomfortable or very uncomfortable disclosing poor mental health

Focus on disclosure

Although over half of respondents said they wouldn't feel comfortable disclosing poor mental health, **77 per cent** of those who did disclose felt supported after doing so.

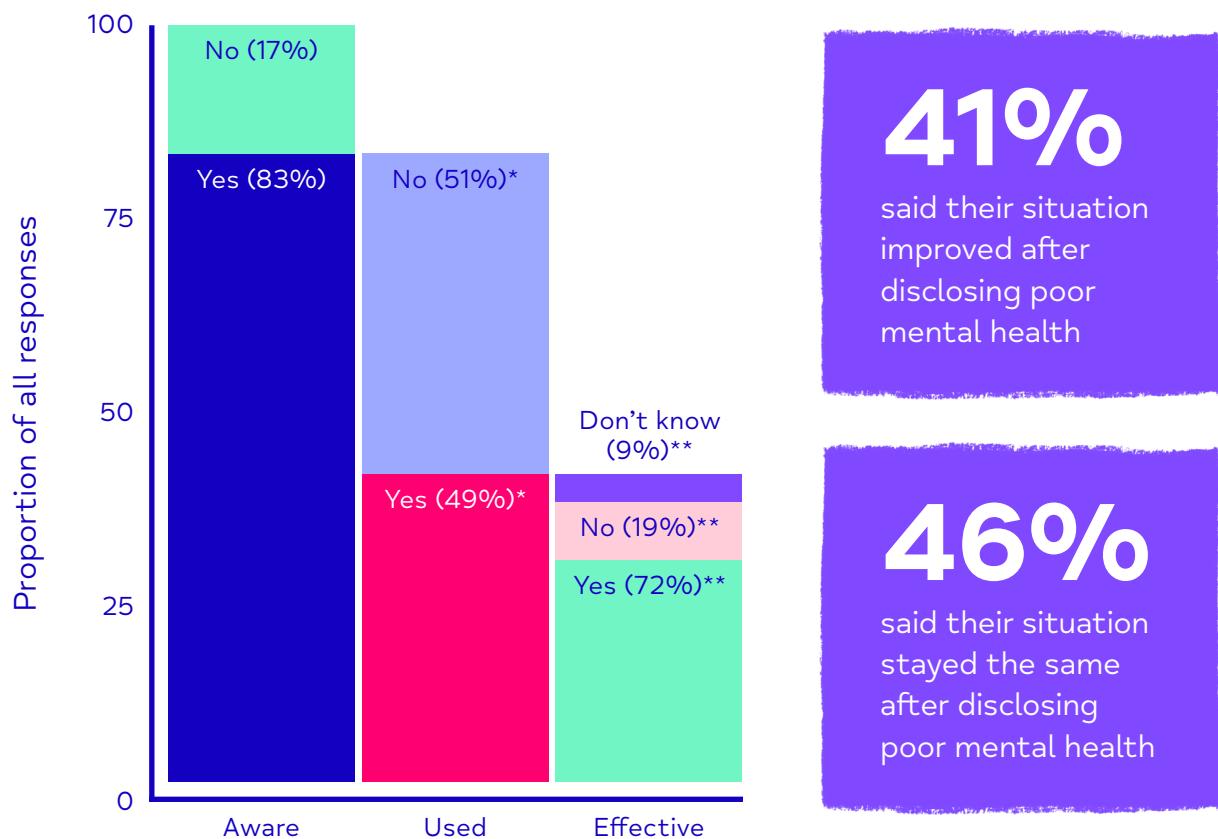
This highlights the importance of creating an open culture and positive relationships with line managers, to whom employees are most likely to disclose to at work.

Awareness, use, and effectiveness of support tools

Based on 24,393 respondents who experienced poor mental health at work.

*proportion of those aware of support tools

**proportion of those who used support tools



Index journey

Organisations who took part in our Workplace Wellbeing Index in 2019/20 showed an **overall increase of 14 per cent** this year in the proportion of employees who felt they would be supported by their employer if they disclosed poor mental health.

Conclusion

As a final reflection on the messages outlined in Index Insights 2020/21, it is great to see that employee mental health and wellbeing is continuing to be prioritised for so many organisations. This is highlighted by the sizeable improvement seen by organisations who have been committed to participating in the Index, and workplace wellbeing initiatives, over several years.

To ensure progress continues, employers must now focus on ensuring this momentum is not lost and that wellbeing and inclusion are a mainstay as businesses look to create effective ways of working post lockdown.

Whilst it is encouraging to see employers becoming more aware of the impact of good and poor mental health at work, organisations need to prioritise ensuring line managers are enabled to do more than advocate good practice by actually role modelling good practice themselves.

This requires increased focus on job design and workload to ensure employees can feel confident that their wellbeing really is a priority.

Finally, our results suggest a fear of judgement by employees disclosing a mental health problem, as well as a lack of confidence in support tools. This limits the opportunity for positive change, meaning organisations must continue to monitor and review their support tools and initiatives to ensure they are having the desired impact.





We're Mind, the mental health charity. We're here to fight for mental health. For support. For respect. For you.

We provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. We campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.

mind.org.uk

 **MindCharity**

 **mindforbettermentalhealth**

 **mindcharity**

 **mind_2**

Mind, 2 Redman Place, London E20 1JQ

Mind is a registered charity in England (no. 219830) and a registered company (no. 424348) in England and Wales.