Stress Awareness Month:

Stress in the workplace

JUST EAT
for business

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Foreword

Working from home also brings its own challenges as many struggle to switch off after a day's work, which naturally impacts their personal life.

As we emerge from the pandemic, it couldn't be more important to take a moment to consider how employees are feeling. Workplace stress affects everyone, so, at Just Eat for Business, we ran a survey on UK workers to better understand their views on stress at work. The results? Businesses need to be doing more to manage their team's stress levels.

In 2019 and 2020, 17.9 million working days were lost due to stress, anxiety or depression. Then hurtled into a global pandemic, stress in the workplace reached its peak as the masses navigated working from home and hybrid working.

Despite things now feeling a little more 'normal', with many companies back in the office in a hybrid structure, employees are still finding it hard to maintain a work-life balance, often working longer hours to meet deadline demands.

So what can we do to help this? At Just Eat for Business, we believe we need to listen to what employees want and make this into a reality. From offering subsidised lunches in the office, to access to treats while working from home with Just Eat Pay, to the opportunity to work flexibly, we provide initiatives that keep morale high. We invest in a range of perks - ones that benefit people individually as well as social activities that help bring teams together.

Matt Ephgrave, Managing Director at Just Eat for Business

What and why

WHY?

April is Stress Awareness Month. The HSE defines stress as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them'. According to the HSE, 17.9 million working days were lost to stress, anxiety or depression in 2019/20.[1]

Despite the fact that many companies have adapted their approach to work by offering flexible working hours and hybrid working, many employees still work long hours, are under pressure to hit deadlines and find it hard to strike a good work/life balance.

Almost everybody experiences stress at work to varying degrees, but we wanted to better understand some of the stress-related challenges and concerns employers and employees face with regards to experiencing stress at work.

WHAT?

In April 2022, we ran a survey on over 300 UK workers to understand their views on stress at work.

Respondents were asked questions about their experiences of stress at work, what would make them feel less stressed at work, and helping colleagues who are experiencing stress at work.

A company-wide issue

Looking at which people are most affected by stress at work - what job roles do they hold? What is their working environment like?

Who did we survey?

Stress Awareness Survey - Demographics

Job seniority:

Junior / Executive

36%

Mid-level management

34%

Senior management

18%

Company director

8%

Founder / C-suite

4%

Age:

18 - 24

9%

25 - 40

32%

41 - 55

34%

55+

25%

What best describes your current working environment?

Current working environment

Hybrid working

50%

Full-time in office

41%

Full-time remote working

9%

Daily routine

How does stress affect employees' day-to-day working lives?

Which aspects of your working life do you find most stressful?

Based on our survey, 30% of respondents found maintaining a work/life balance the most stressful thing about work, with deadlines and workloads also causing stress for people.

With many people working under a hybrid model, the ability to maintain a good work/life balance has, in some instances, become more challenging. Based on our 2022 Digital Detox report[2], 7% of UK workers don't take any breaks until the end of the working day, and 35% are skipping more breaks than the same time last year.

Maintaining a work/life balance
30%

Meeting deadlines and dealing with workload
26%

Disagreements with colleagues
16%

Discussing salary or career progression
12%

Attending social occasions at work
9%

Meetings and collaboration time
7%

What would you change, if anything, about your working environment to reduce stress?

Trial a four-day workweek

39%

Increase budget for wellbeing at work

16%

Shift to flexible arrangements (hybrid work)

15%

Bring pets into the office

13%

Shift to complete remote working

9%

Make social events optional

8%

As we make our way out of the pandemic and continue to adjust to our 'new normal', many employees have their own views on how to reduce stress in the workplace. One of the big questions is "what would you change, if anything, about your working environment to reduce stress?'.

Based on our survey, over a third of employees would like to trial a 4 day work week, and 1 in 6 would like to see an increased budget for wellbeing at work. Whilst this may be challenging for some companies to achieve, it certainly paints a clear picture on the actions that employees value for minimising stress.

Has stress in the workplace ever extended into your personal life?

Yes **67%**	
No **33%**	

Two thirds of our respondents said that workplace stress has extended into their personal lives.

When workplace stress builds up over time, it can affect relationships outside of work, energy levels and mental health.[3] The pandemic introduced hybrid and flexible working, which has been an advantage for many employees who have enjoyed an improved work/life balance. However, for others, the pressures of trying to home school children while doing a full day's work, or the lack of workplace social interactions has caused a lot of stress.[4]

To support their teams, employers will need to continue to be flexible and responsive to people's needs as we navigate the 'new normal'.

Company culture

A look at whether stress at work is impacted by company culture, and what organisations can do to minimise stress for their teams.

Would you feel comfortable voicing your feelings of stress at work?

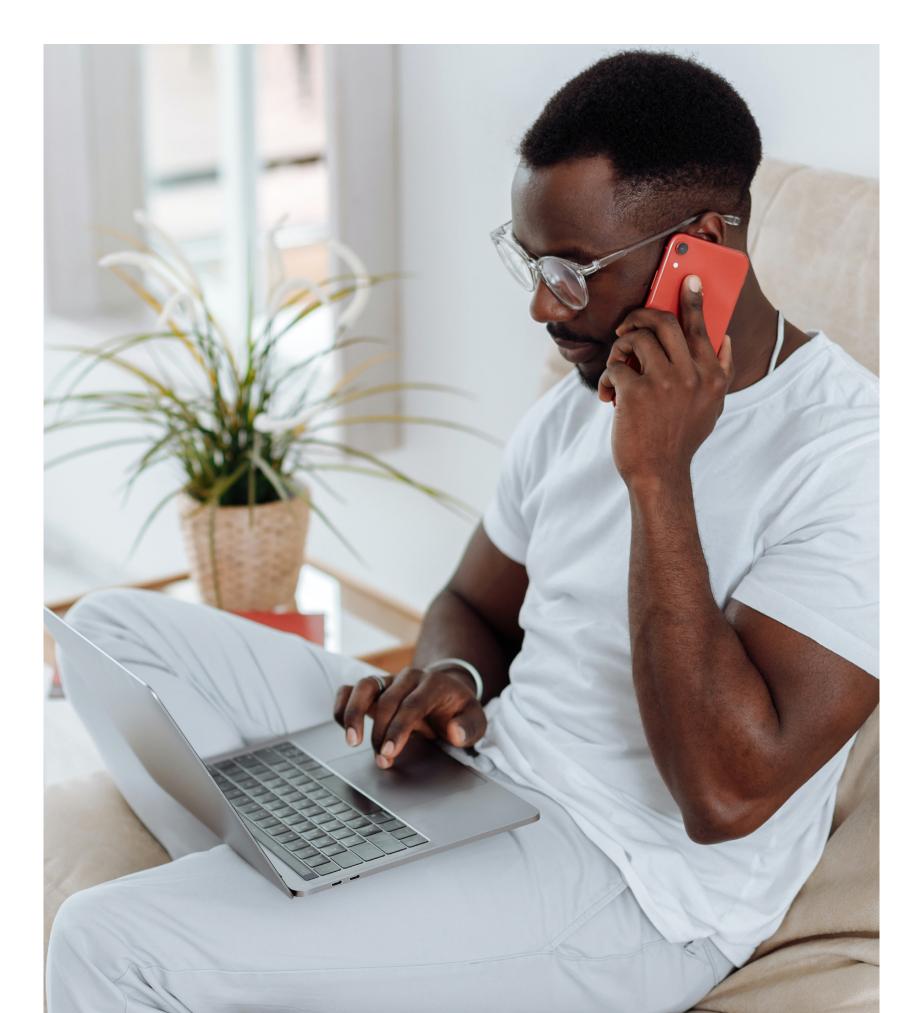|	
Yes	**65%**

No	**35%**

Two thirds of employees feel comfortable expressing their feelings of stress at work, but that still leaves a third who aren't. This could be attributed to several factors, such as relationships with direct reports or line managers or the working environment that they are in.

What we have learned from the pandemic and its impact on mental health is that the role of the workplace is changing. Employers need to ensure that everyone feels comfortable enough to reach out for help with stress, no matter what their role is.
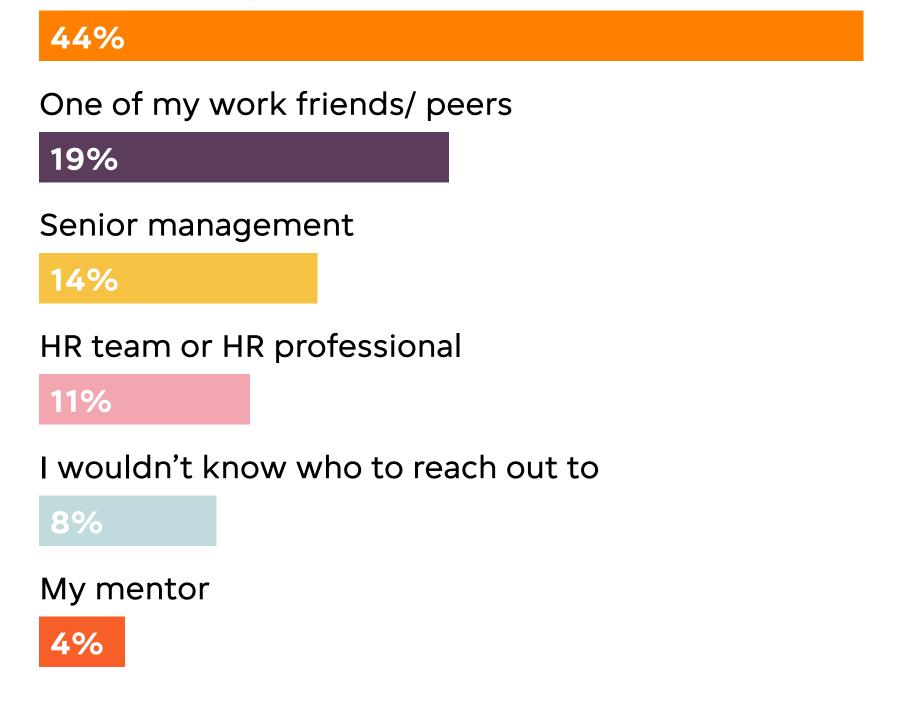
Who would you talk to in your workplace if you were in a stressful situation?

Nearly half of our respondents would speak to their line manager about a stressful situation at work, further emphasising that team relationships and connections are key to a successful working environment.

My line manager

44%

One of my work friends/ peers

19%

Senior management

14%

HR team or HR professional

11%

I wouldn't know who to reach out to

8%

My mentor

4%

Would you know how to identify a colleague going through a stressful situation?

Yes	**79%**	

No	**21%**

Based on our 2021 Lunch Break Bonding report[5], 43% of UK workers speak to their colleagues on a daily basis and 30% feel that they know their colleagues very well. Team-building and peer relationships are an integral part of a successful and effective office infrastructure as they can help break down communication barriers and hierarchy, foster friendship and encourage mutual support.

The COVID pandemic has significantly changed the way we work and what we expect to get out of a workplace environment - one of the key levers are the people we work with.

Conclusion

Summary of our findings and key takeaways

Stress is a company-wide concern

Workplace stress affects people of all ages and in all roles. Our survey has shown that businesses should be proactive when it comes to managing stress in the workplace. Tools and provisions that focus on prevention or early intervention, such as regular check-ins and wellbeing support, is key to managing stress at work.

Over a quarter of respondents said they find meeting deadlines and dealing with workload the most stressful aspect of work, and one in five say they wouldn't know how to identify a colleague who was experiencing stress at work. Workplace stress is notably a company-wide issue that occurs for almost everyone.

Flexibility is key

Flexibility is crucial for helping employees manage stress at work, with over two-thirds of respondents demonstrating how flexible working policies could significantly improve their stress-levels at work. Whether it's through implementing a hybrid working plan, mandating flexible working, or trialling a 4-day week, employers and businesses should focus on keeping employees engaged and motivated whether they're working from the office or at home.

With a third of respondents saying they find maintaining a work/life balance the most stressful thing about work, this further supports the need for employers to be adaptable to each person's needs.

Our survey has highlighted the need for a flexible approach to wellbeing and combating stress - companies should invest in things that support people individually, as well as activities that bring teams together to bond and socialise.

A successful work culture relies on strong peer relationships

Fostering and maintaining peer relationships at work is paramount for supporting employees and helping to minimise stress at work. Over a third of UK workers don't feel comfortable voicing their feelings of stress at work - but double that amount (66%) say that workplace stress has extended into their personal lives. People need a culture of openness and flexibility so that they're able to confide in managers and support colleagues.

Employees should feel comfortable in expressing their feelings of stress to their line manager, HR representative or peers, and employers need to focus on creating an environment which promotes openness and understanding, plus providing the resources for people to support themselves and their colleagues should they experience workplace stress.

Based on our survey, it's clear that when it comes to mental health and stress at work, businesses need to adapt to meet the needs of their employees if they want to recruit and retain their people.

Wellbeing shouldn't be an afterthought

One in six UK workers said that they would like an increased budget for wellbeing to reduce work stress.

Since the pandemic, companies have likely adapted their wellbeing offerings for teams in the office and those working from home, but in order to support employees and provide them with services they need, further steps should be taken. Throughout the day, employers should encourage people to take regular screen breaks, get some exercise and promote and facilitate healthy eating. When it comes to the bigger picture, businesses should dedicate time and resource into developing workplace support networks, such as investing in mental health resources, to foster a supportive environment.

Whether it's providing lunch in the office for employees, organising team-building activities, sending morale-boosting treats to enjoy at home or keeping meetings fueled with brain-boosting snacks, food perks are an easy way for organisations to provide parity to their in-office and at-home workers seamlessly so nobody feels left out.

Our survey supports the idea that wellbeing perks and provisions like team lunches and social events can play a big role in maintaining positive company culture.

About us

Who are Just Eat for Business?

Just Eat for Business is the UK's leading corporate food delivery service and part of the Just Eat Takeaway.com group, the largest food delivery company globally. We offer a range of simple and flexible solutions that make it easy for you to order great food for any occasion, in the office or at home.

We connect corporate customers to 600+ of the best restaurants and caterers around to provide their employees with delicious food, drinks, and snacks.

Whether their teams are back in the office or working from home, we have solutions to suit every company. With safe, contact-free delivery available nationwide, Just Eat for Business helps companies keep their staff well-fed and connected, however far apart they may be.

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just-eat.co.uk/business

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References

1 CIPD Stress at work factsheet

2 Just Eat for Business Digital Detox Report, 2022

3 How will your company promote Stress Awareness?

4 Stress Awareness in the workplace - a mini guide

5 Just Eat for Business Lunch Break Bonding Report, 2021