PENINSULA

PROUDLY CANADIAN

Quarterly Global Mental Health Survey

Canada

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2025 has already been a challenging year for Canadian businesses with frequent federal and provincial updates and an uncertain global economy. Behind every high-performing team is a workforce that feels safe and supported because even during tough times, productivity, resilience, and peak performance start with wellbeing. This year, our global mental health survey reaffirms just how critical that link between business performance and employee wellbeing is.

In Canada, the results reflect an adjusting workplace landscape. Although this year's data indicate possible stabilization, it has seen cutbacks in mental health support measures suggesting that these are the times for both progress and concern.

While it's encouraging to see an overall decline in mental health-related absences and the overall numbers may suggest some positive shifts, we still must be cautious. A mere 20% of Canadian employers said they were very confident that their employees will disclose their mental health issues, showing a worrying erosion in psychological safety and suggesting that a healthy workplace requires constant and proactive effort.

Investing in mental health is a strategic imperative for Canadian businesses. As more businesses transition back to office, we must view these findings with a different lens. While structure and in-person connection can positively impact mental health by reducing isolation and fostering stronger support systems, they must be balanced with flexibility.

A well-designed return-to-office policy that prioritizes open communication, inclusivity, and access to support can play a pivotal role in restoring psychological safety in the workplace.

As you explore the findings in the pages ahead, I encourage you to view them not just through the lens of today's workforce but tomorrow's.

Glossary

Employee Assistance Program: Also known as an "EAP", is a confidential employee benefit service that provides support and resources to help employees manage personal or work-related issues that may be impacting their overall wellbeing or job performance.

Mental-health related absences (or sickness): Refers to absences reported by the employee that stem from mental health-related reasons.

Mental-wellbeing: A state of positive mental health. This is not necessarily due to an absence of a mental health condition, but rather, resilience and positive attitudes towards work and the stresses of everyday life.

Peak performance: Achieving optimum performance at work.

About the research

Every year, The Peninsula Group conducts a global survey to analyze attitudes towards mental health in the workplace. We surveyed 79,000 businesses across Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the UK to better understand how these trends are changing over time. As the conversation around mental health further develops, we can see what organizations are prioritizing and where changes still need to be made around attitudes towards mental health in the workplace.

Businesses of all sizes, across a wide range of industries, shared details of how mental health is impacting the workplace. This report specifically explores the Canadian results and how they compare globally.

Industries surveyed

4%	Accountancy, banking and finance	3%	Leisure, sport, tourism
3%	Business services, consulting or management	0%	Landscaping
6%	Charity	1%	Manufacturing
3%	Construction	8%	Property, real estate or construction
1%	Energy or utilities	6%	Public services or administration
11%	Engineering or manufacturing	1%	Recycling
16%	Healthcare	7%	Retail or wholesale
3%	Hospitality	5%	Transportation
2%	Information Technology	20%	Other

Company sizes surveyed

8% | 1 - 5 employees

41% | 6 - 20 employees

26% | 21 - 50 employees

13% | 51 - 100 employees

7% | 101 - 200 employees

5% | More than 200 employees

5%
More than 200 employees

7%
101 - 200 employees

8%
1 - 5 employees

13%
51 - 100 employees

41%
6 - 20 employees

26%
21 - 50 employees
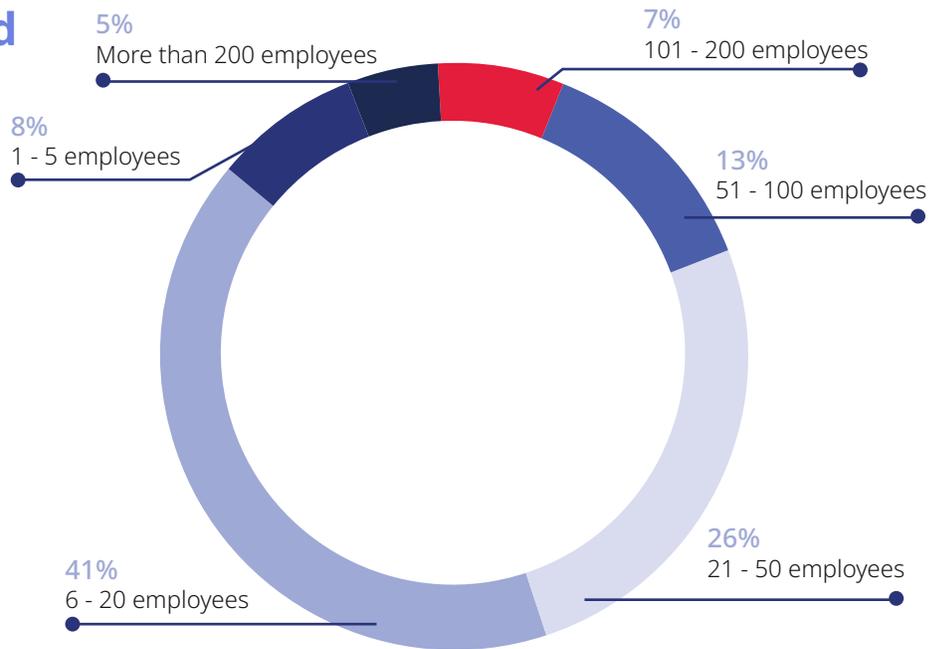
Results at a glance

24% Of Canadian employers have seen increased mental-health related absences

16% Of Canadian employers have experienced poor mental health over the last 12 months

80% Of employers said they do not feel confident that employees would disclose mental health issues

66% Do not offer mental health days in addition to leave entitlements

20% Only **1 in 5** employers are very confident that employees would disclose mental health issues

1% Of Canadian businesses have mental health first aiders in the workplace

22% Of employers are uncomfortable discussing mental health with their employees

14% Of organizations offer mental health training to their employees or managers

34% Saw an increase in people experiencing issues with mental health

2% Of employers experiencing mental health issues used an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

Employer perceptions vs reality

This year, we've already seen substantial changes, economic uncertainties, and much more. Our survey has revealed that both leaders and employees are feeling the strain.

With majority of employers **(57%)** believing that employees won't discuss mental health issues with their managers, it raises the question of whether managers, leaders, and business owners are truly fostering a psychologically safe work environment or just shying away from conversations around mental health due to not knowing how to talk about it.

When asked what else could be introduced to improve mental health at work, one respondent said:

"I do have extended health benefits that does address some mental health support"

77%   Of businesses surveyed in Canada don't offer mental health days to their employees, and

34%   Of businesses have experienced an increase in mental health sick leave of their employees.

On the other hand, over half of leaders surveyed in Canada are observing more open discussions about mental health at work, and 27% have observed their employees, as well as themselves, prioritizing work-life balance.

This begs the question, why are so many leaders not confident their employees would disclose if they were struggling with a mental health issue? If conversations are more open, and work-life balance is on the rise, then where is the disconnect?

Are the measures being put in place by employers to help manage mental health in the workplace actually being embedded into workplaces or just a tick box exercise?

How can this affect peak performance at work?

You can't pour from an empty cup, regardless of whether you're an employer or an employee. Excessive stress over prolonged periods can lead to burnout. When it comes to burnout, prevention is better than a cure. If you can spot when an employee is struggling, you have a much better chance of reducing burnout altogether.

More and more companies are recognizing that there is a need to support their employees' mental health.

Not only do employers have a duty of care towards their employees but businesses that do will reap the benefits, seeing tangible results like reduced absences, improved productivity and performance.

Although **30%** businesses have seen that their people have started speaking more about mental health; it's clear that there is still more work to be done when it comes to having difficult conversations around mental health in the workplace.

Data from Mental Health Research Canada shows that 68% of employees describe their workplace as psychologically safe and it's evident that employees are more engaged and productive when their organization offers mental health resources, such as access to counselling or wellness programmes.

With proper support as standard in benefits packages, including mental health training for employees and managers, mental health first aiders, EAPs, and open, supportive cultures, all employers should be confident their employees would speak up if they were struggling.

Mental health stigma from employers

Some employers surveyed expressed strong feelings towards mental health issues, some of which continue to perpetuate the stigma around mental health. While mental health issues are ultimately dealt with by an individual and their support system, employers may not have a fundamental knowledge surrounding mental health and the ways in which work and workplace culture can either cause or worsen issues for their employees.

Survey respondent:

"Mental Health is usually attached to issues in someone's life. We hire people with healthy lifestyles to avoid such problems!"

Survey respondent:

"We want to squash the mental health taboo!".

Survey respondent:

"We experience a lot of loss in our industry, and we see a lot of hardship as well when clients are faced with cost vs. care for their pet. It is an emotional roller coaster. To add to the difficulty of our industry, we are short staffed, it is hard to find staff who can withstand what we deal with long term, hence why we have a lot of people using their sick days as mental health days. We do not offer mental health days in addition to the 5 paid sick days that our employees are entitled to as we struggle to stay fully staffed as it is, and the less people we have on a day, the more we burn out our staff. So it is truly finding that balance".

Survey respondent:

"We currently have an emotional support animal in the office every day (with their charge) and things haven't changed."

Mental health stigma and peak performance

If people feel they can't open up about their mental health or express concern, how can they be expected to perform at their best?

There are positive signs that suggest this message is getting through. 30% of respondents said that people have been speaking more in the last 12 months, however only 9% of those who spoke to their boss said that support had been put in place. Although the numbers are little worrying, there's a silver lining where only 1% said that they had spoken to their boss and nothing was done.

We know how difficult it can be to speak out about mental health. Physical problems can often be much easier to talk about, and some people are reluctant to admit they're struggling mentally. Mental health is now the leading cause of absence, so while the stigma may be decreasing it remains prominent.

If you notice a change in an employee or someone starting to take more and more time off, there could be underlying issues they are not expressing. This may be because they're worried you won't understand, or their job won't be secure. Having open conversations about mental health will help employees feel more comfortable to admit when they're struggling.

Businesses and senior executives must lead by example. Employers who prioritize and lead by example become agents for cultural change. That means advocating healthy behaviour, sharing mental health challenges, and creating space for open conversations – all of which create a performance culture driven by wellbeing.

All too often, businesses like to dabble in employee wellbeing by simply ticking a box rather than bringing in meaningful support. This practice must change if we are to meet the acute mental health challenges of the 21st century.

Leaders must take ownership and invest wisely in workplace initiatives that offer meaningful strategies for prevention and mental health awareness. Those that do, can expect to see their business's performance, productivity, and profits increase alongside employee retention and wellbeing.

Employers are struggling too

Employers have a duty of care to safeguard the wellbeing of their people. However, the pressures that employers themselves feel can often be overlooked. 1 in 6 Canadian employers surveyed reported experiencing poor mental health over the last year. And when they're struggling, who do they turn to? 21% spoke to friends and family and only 10% spoke to their GP.

Interestingly, while 23% of employers surveyed have an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in place, **only 2%** of employers who have experienced mental ill-health over the last 12 months sought support from it.

Survey respondent:

"Our recent addition of Benefits (EAP) has been a long time coming. Only launched Jan 1/25. Hopefully this will make a difference for the Teams' mental health."

Survey respondent:

"We intend to have more open communication on mental health and work/life balance."

Survey respondent:

"We do have an EAP program for our staff, and our employees feel very comfortable coming to me to discuss their mental health struggles. Thankfully, we have a caring, and supportive team. However, we all feel it when someone is consistently off!"

Michelle Ann Zoleta

Manager of Health & Safety at Peninsula Canada, says:

"As someone who's worked closely with teams across all kinds of workplaces, I can confidently tell you that when managers or business owners take the time to really understand mental health, it changes everything. During this survey, I've heard comments that show there's still a lot of misunderstanding out there where mental health is a taboo and is considered a personal issue - something that shouldn't show up at work.

But the truth is, it does. It always has. And pretending it doesn't, won't make it go away - it will just make your employees feel alone and unwelcome. Over time, businesses will begin to see the effects on employees' attitudes toward work, their declining engagement & productivity, poor attendance and retention rates."

That's why education is of utmost importance. When business owners and managers make the effort to learn, to listen, and to lead with empathy, it creates workplaces where people feel supported, valued, and psychologically safe.

The best part is – it's never too late! Now's the time for the leaders to act. Bring in resources, provide training, and show your team that their well-being is your priority."

Employers are seeking ways to support their people

It's in an employer's interest to reduce the number of sickness absences in their workplace. Not only for the wellbeing of their people, but for their bottom line and achieving peak performance in the workplace.

Of those reporting an increase in sickness rates over the past year (24%) due to mental health issues:

80% Do not feel confident that employees would disclose a mental health issue to their employer.

34% Of managers have observed an increase in the number of people experiencing issues with their mental health at work

20% Claim to be very confident their employees will discuss mental health issues with their line manager or employer

41% Of organizations don't intend to implement any mental health provisions for their employees in the next 12 months.

While there's still a way to go in educating employers on the importance of psychological safety and mental wellbeing overall, we've observed positive sentiment from employers looking to learn about ways to improve mental health and wellbeing in their employees.

Survey respondent:

"We have several counselors on site at all times who are trained to help anyone experiencing mental health issues like suicide ideation, etc."

Survey respondent:

"It is a great initiative to take mental health seriously in all industries and make it a part of normal daily group huddles in the workplace. Appropriate support is important as well."

Survey respondent:

"Mental health is a delicate topic and our office is very supportive and understanding of staff needs but as it is a delicate topic it is not often talked about. Our office accommodates work from home, days off & flexible working hours within reason. We allow our staff to make these decisions, and management is very supportive and professional."

Employers support in impacting peak performance

Industry sector has a part to play in how employers ensure peak performance within their organizations. Critical industries such as healthcare can be particularly challenging due to the nature of the roles involved. If the right steps are in place – such as access to counselling, occupational health and/or critical incident management – employers can help their employees access valuable resources in times of crisis, or when a line manager is unavailable.
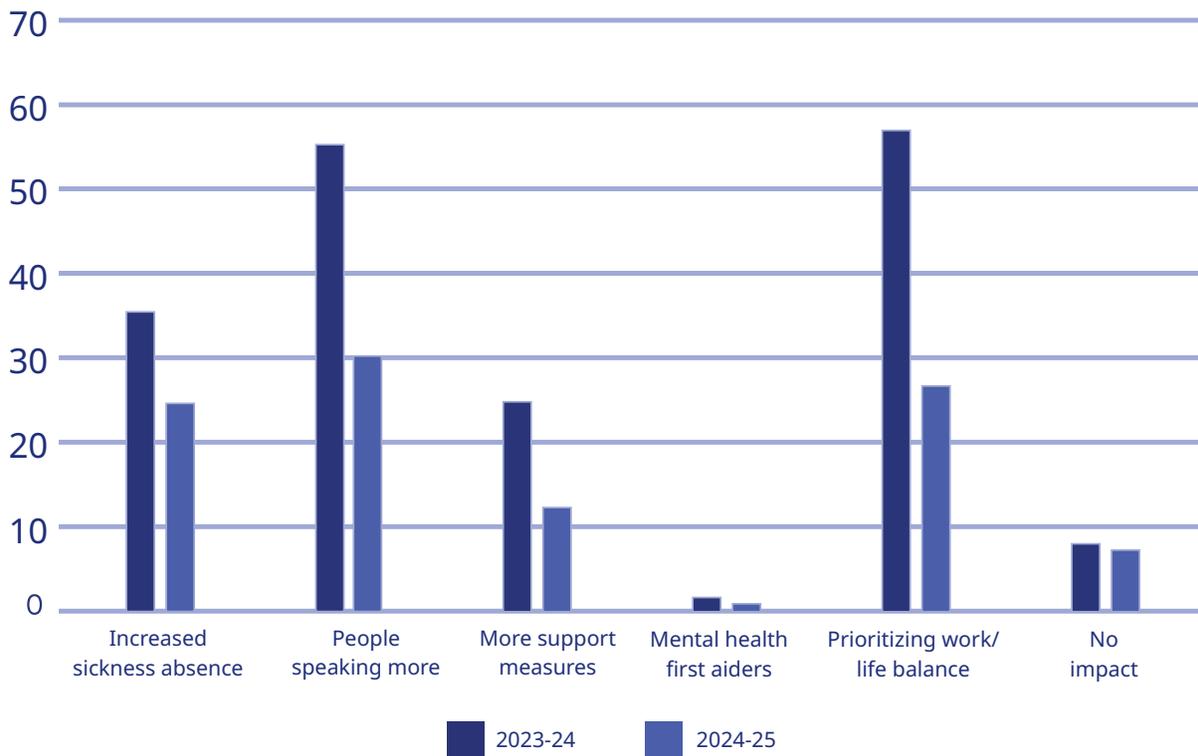
This in turn can facilitate peak performance by supporting employees back to full health a lot sooner than if they had been unable to access support.
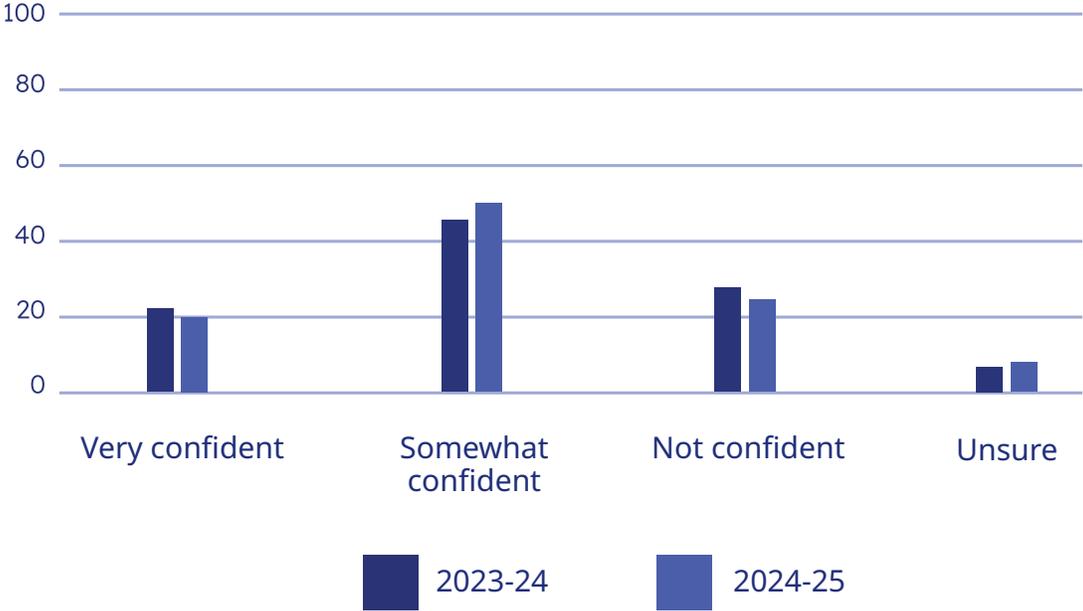
Notable year-on-year comparisons

While businesses are reporting a decline in mental health related absences which is a positive indicator of progress, the significant reduction in support measures being implemented is a cause for concern. This trend may suggest that employees do not feel safe or comfortable speaking openly about their mental health, and that stigma continues to persist within workplace environments.

What impact have you seen on mental health in your workplace over the last 12 months? (%)

Legend: 2023-24, 2024-25

Categories: Increased sickness absence, People speaking more, More support measures, Mental health first aiders, Prioritizing work/life balance, No impact
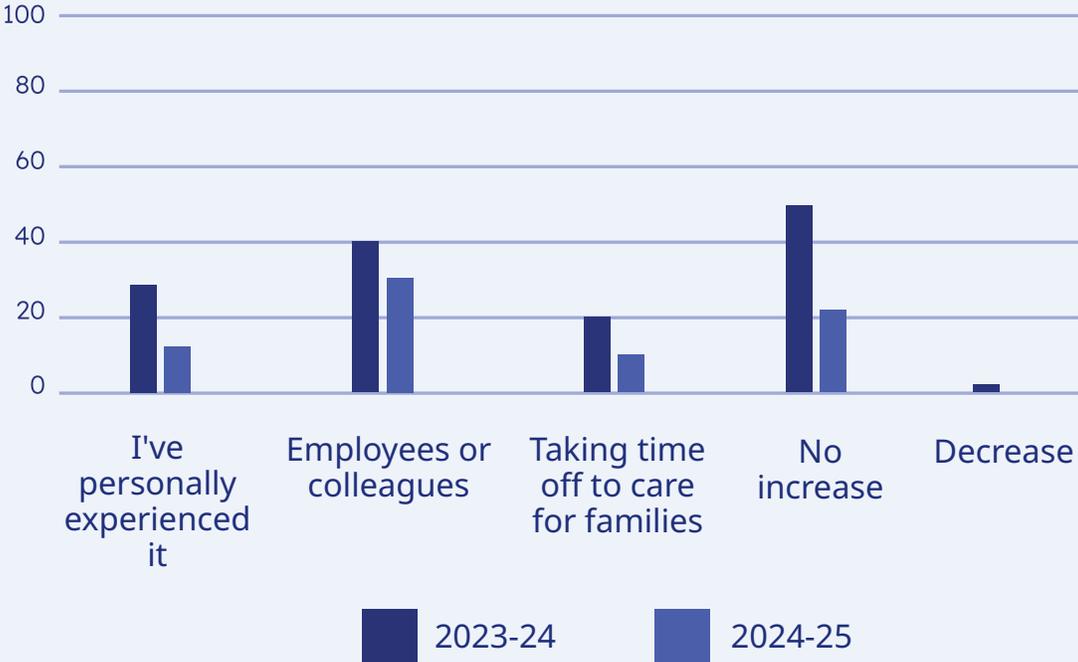
While taking days off due to reasons other than physical illness has seen a decrease, confidence in discussing mental health has also dropped year-on-year. Coupled with decrease in support measures, these in time can contribute to poor work performance and lower work morale, which is bad news for businesses.

How confident are you that your employees would disclose a mental health issue to you or their line manager? (%)

Chart data — categories: Very confident, Somewhat confident, Not confident, Unsure
- Very confident: 2023-24 ≈ 22, 2024-25 ≈ 20
- Somewhat confident: 2023-24 ≈ 45, 2024-25 ≈ 49
- Not confident: 2023-24 ≈ 28, 2024-25 ≈ 24
- Unsure: 2023-24 ≈ 6, 2024-25 ≈ 8

Legend: 2023-24, 2024-25

Businesses have seen a slight decline in reported mental health challenges year-over-year, both personally and among colleagues. While fewer employees are taking time off to support the family, the absence of any reported improvement shows mental health remains a persistent issue in the workplace.

Have you seen an increase in the number of people experiencing issues with mental health in your workplace?

Chart data — categories: I've personally experienced it, Employees or colleagues, Taking time off to care for families, No increase, Decrease
- I've personally experienced it: 2023-24 ≈ 29, 2024-25 ≈ 13
- Employees or colleagues: 2023-24 ≈ 40, 2024-25 ≈ 30
- Taking time off to care for families: 2023-24 ≈ 21, 2024-25 ≈ 10
- No increase: 2023-24 ≈ 50, 2024-25 ≈ 22
- Decrease: 2023-24 ≈ 2, 2024-25 ≈ 0

Legend: 2023-24, 2024-25

Global results

In addition to Canada, the Peninsula Group surveyed employers in Ireland, UK, Australia and New Zealand to understand the impact of mental health issues in the workplace over the past year. The impact varies per territory, with the UK and Australia seeing the highest rates of absences due to mental health.

- 1 in 3 employers globally saw increased sickness absence due to mental health over the last 12 months

- Canada and Ireland have seen the lowest increased rates of absences related to mental health; Australia saw the largest increase

- The UK is leading the way when it comes to mental health support in the workplace

- Employers in New Zealand are least likely to have workplace mental health support in place

- Most employers globally don't provide any mental health training to their employees

- Australia tops the charts with work-life balance, but also in increased absences

- Employers in New Zealand are most likely, with UK and Irish employers least likely, to take time off due to mental ill health

While more employees are speaking up and work/life balance is being prioritized, the data shows fewer businesses are introducing concrete support measures - highlighting a gap between awareness and action.

What impact have you seen on mental health in your workplace over the last 12 months (%)?


Legend: AUS, CA, IRE, NZ, UK
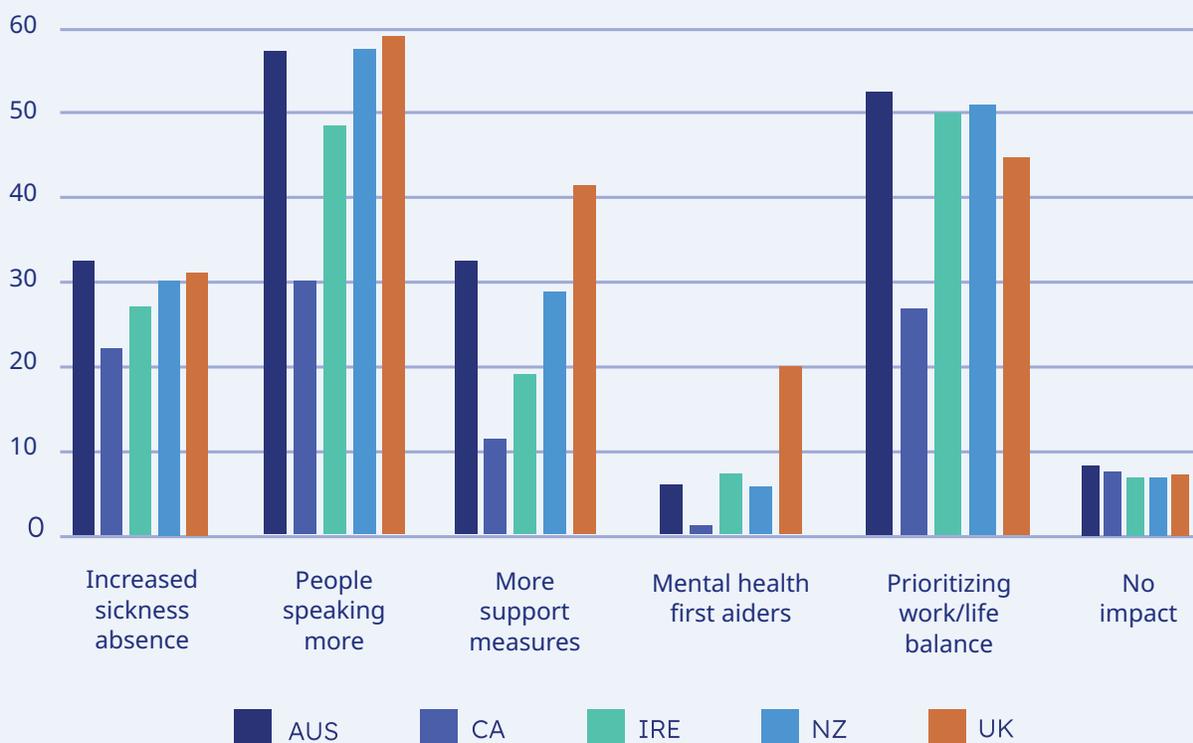
Over a quarter of employers globally are either unsure or not confident that employees would disclose a mental health issue to their line manager. While there may be more specific reasons for this, the prevalence in mental health stigma at work could be to blame.

How confident are you that your employees would disclose a mental health issue to you or their line manager? (%)


Legend: AUS, CA, IRE, NZ, UK
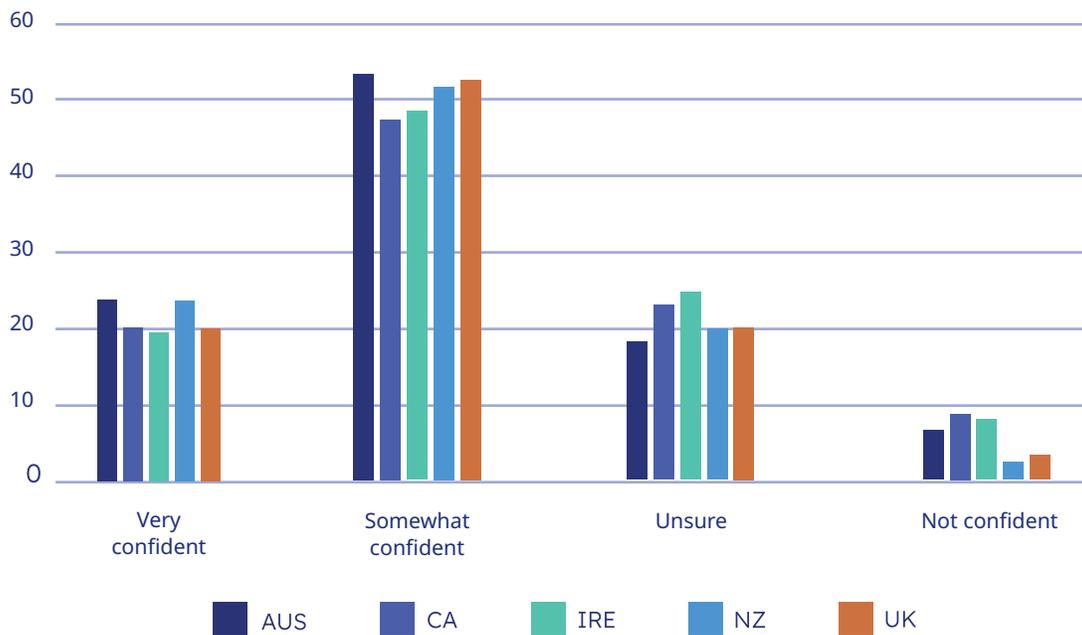
Employers and colleagues experiencing mental health issues is high across all territories. Although Canada does not have the highest rate of mental health concerns among employees in the workplace, it is still concerning with high numbers in both employees and business owners experiences mental health issues.

Have you seen an increase in the number of people experiencing issues with mental health in your workplace? (%)

Legend: AUS, CA, IRE, NZ, UK
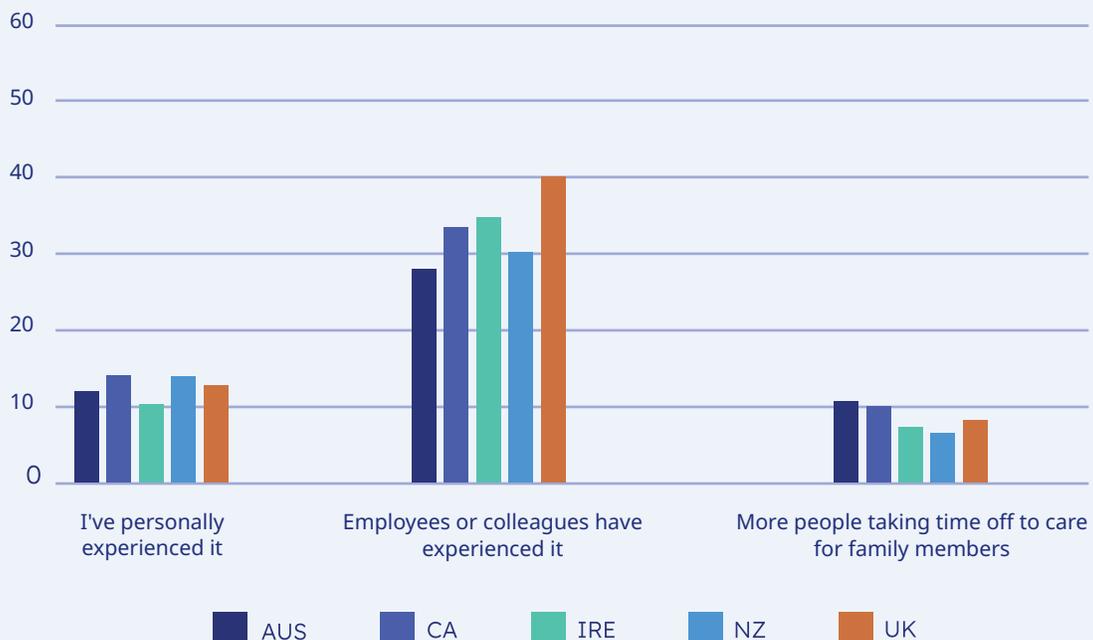
Yet despite the high number of mental health issues reported by employers and employees alike, businesses are not planning to do much about it. Nor have respondents chosen to disclose any other implementations not listed in our response options.

Which of the following do you plan to introduce within the next 12 months? (%)

Legend: AUS, CA, IRE, NZ, UK
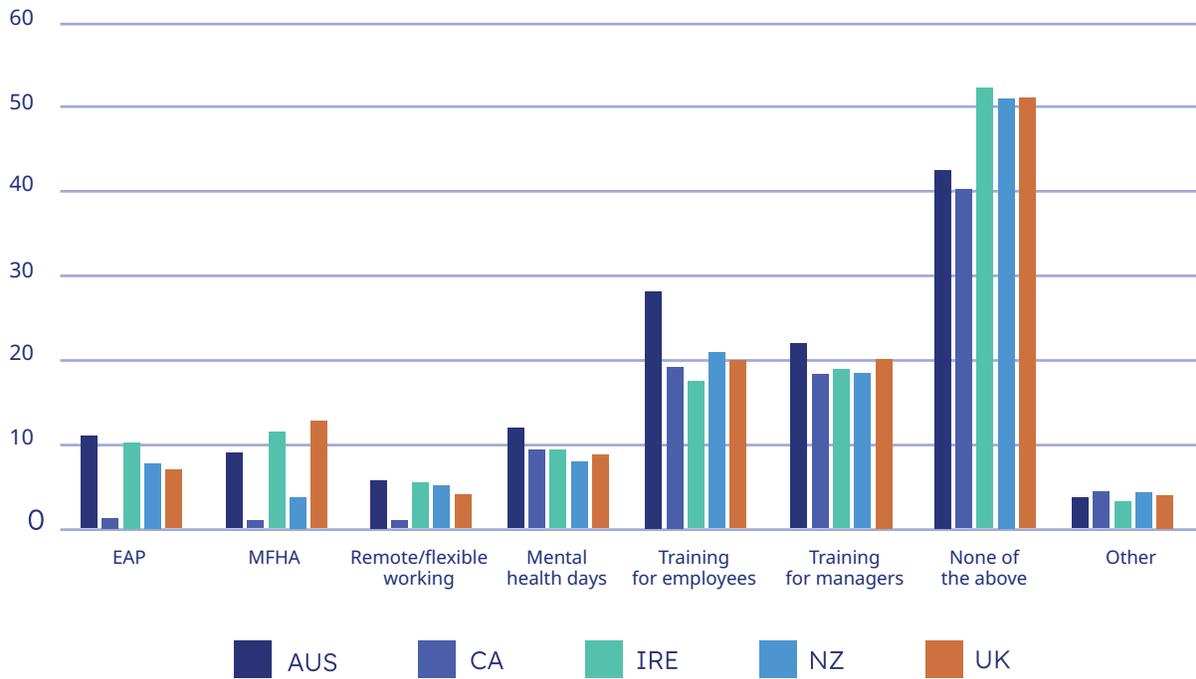
Mujda Rasoul

Associate Director of Service at Peninsula Canada, says:

"As we reviewed the findings from this survey, it's clear that while many businesses in Canada have support tools like Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), these alone are no longer enough. With more people opening up about their mental health, we need to go one step further.

In the fast-paced world of small and mid-sized businesses across the country, it's easy to implement surface-level solutions. But our responsibility as leaders is to go beyond just the basics. We must continuously evaluate, refine, and strengthen the systems we have in place to create truly psychologically safe workplaces.

Let's face it; not everyone feels comfortable talking about mental health with their manager or employer. That's exactly why it's so important to foster an environment where employees feel safe, supported, and genuinely cared for.

Will it take extra effort? Absolutely. But this is where business leaders need to rise to the occasion. When we invest in ongoing education, raise awareness, and stay committed to open communication, the payoff is clear: Healthier teams, stronger engagement, and better business outcomes."

Key takeaways

You can only get the most out of your team when they feel supported at work.

As we've observed, over the last year, employers have experienced significant changes and challenges – notably, a higher number of employees experiencing issues with mental health issues and more people addressing these issues in the workplace.

According to the survey, business owners don't plan to introduce any changes for mental health issues which implies that there is lots of work to be done to ensure that majority of employers facilitate mental wellbeing in the workplace and ensure their people are well supported and can feel psychologically safe in the workplace.

Whilst this report has analyzed several areas of concern for employers, it's clear the most important thing is for businesses to be educated on mental health matters. Through education, we can:

♡ Abolish mental health stigma at work

♡ Boost workplace performance

♡ Increase our emotional intelligence, empathy, and understanding

♡ Facilitate real change and workplace accommodations

Recommendations

Based on our findings, we've highlighted our top three recommendations that employers should consider:

1 Embed mental health and wellbeing throughout your workplace

Ensure you have provisions in place to support mental health and wellbeing in your workplace. This needs to be embedded across all levels of your organization. Review it regularly, look at usage levels and get feedback from employees to find out what is of value to them. Create a workplace that normalizes conversations about mental health, and lead by example. Look for ways to proactively support staff; this, in turn, will help reduce absence rates and increase productivity.

According to Statistics Canada, the average absenteeism rate in Canada is 3.5% with mental health concerns being one of the causes, thus costing the economy millions making it furthermore important for business owners to address these issues with education and training employees and managers.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) offers free courses for education around mental health. It also runs a Mental Health First Aid program to improve mental health literacy and teach skills to better manage potential mental health problems.

MHCC has also developed a framework called the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace. It is a voluntary set of guidelines, tools, and resources to help employers promote mental health and prevent psychological harm at work.

2 Do more than signpost support

Signposting isn't enough. We recommend encouraging real interactions to facilitate open conversations and to really get to the crux of what may be going on with an individual who has experienced increased sickness rates due to poor mental health. This can look like implementing new wellbeing initiatives or something as simple as starting an open discussion about a mental health awareness campaign or concern. Ensure that all your managers receive proper training, including regular refresher training, in how to spot signs that someone is struggling and have open, transparent, supportive conversations with them.

3 Empower your people

It's not about solving an individual's problems. It's about empowering them to do so. Ultimately, it's down to the individual to seek support, but they may not have the systems or skills. It could be that their working environment is making them feel worse. What small changes can you implement to make a difference in their lives for the betterment of workplace engagement, peak performance and psychological safety at work?

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