# Mental health crisis costs UK employers billions as workplace stress soars



Britain is grappling with an acute mental health crisis, as recent statistics reveal a concerning surge in workplace absences linked to stress, anxiety, and depression. A recent survey indicates that nearly one in four (23%) of the population reported taking multiple mental health days off work in the past year. Furthermore, over a third (35%) acknowledged that their productivity has diminished due to deteriorating mental health. This troubling trend highlights a growing epidemic affecting workers across various sectors, fuelling discussions about possible systemic issues within the workplace.

The financial implications of this mental health crisis are staggering; poor mental health is estimated to cost UK employers £45 billion annually. Reports suggest that approximately 12.8 million working days are lost due to stress, anxiety, or depression, a situation that not only affects productivity but also exerts additional pressure on a healthcare system already operating under strain. Chrysalis, the UK's largest counsellor training provider, conducted the research and noted these alarming figures as they emerged against a backdrop of intensifying long-term sickness rates and increasing economic challenges.

Experts are raising alarms about what some term a “national crisis of resilience.” Critics argue that societal tendencies to label emotional struggles as mental health issues may blur the lines between normal life challenges and mental health disorders. A growing body of evidence suggests that everyday stresses—from fatigue and low moods to frustration over the cost of living—are increasingly being categorised as bona fide mental health concerns. The charitable organisation Mind has linked rising stress levels to broader economic woes, such as household debt and housing insecurity, indicating that financial instability exacerbates workplace malaise.

Furthermore, statistics reveal that stress-related conditions accounted for a staggering 46% of all work-related health cases in 2023, resulting in more than 16 million workdays lost. This figure underscores the escalating impact of workplace pressures, particularly among younger workers; mental health has become the leading cause of work-limiting conditions for those aged 44 and under. Alarmingly, this issue has quintuplied among workers aged 16 to 34 over the past decade. As the intensity of work continues to rise—61% of workers report feeling exhausted by the end of most days—the need for robust mental health support systems in the workplace has never been more urgent.

The financial burden falls heavily on businesses, with estimates indicating that mental health-related absences alone could cost the UK economy around £28 billion annually. Reports reveal that workers are taking an average of 4.7 days off specifically for mental health issues compared to 5.1 days lost due to physical health problems. This is further compounded by the finding that approximately one-third of employees have experienced mental health issues this year, reflecting a growing crisis that demands immediate attention from employers and policymakers alike.

Addressing these challenges will require a comprehensive approach. Many experts suggest moving beyond the traditional separation of mental and physical health issues to adopt more integrated strategies that holistically improve employee wellbeing. As the evidence mounts, the onus is on employers to foster supportive environments that prioritise mental health, thereby enhancing productivity and reducing absenteeism across the workforce. The persistent threat of poor mental health not only jeopardises individual wellbeing but poses significant risks to the broader economic landscape, urging a reassessment of how workplace challenges are perceived and managed.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060370/Sick-Note-Culture-Mental-Health-Days-Surge-Amid-Burnout-Britain-Fears), [[2]](https://www.priorygroup.com/mental-health/stress-treatment/stress-statistics)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060370/Sick-Note-Culture-Mental-Health-Days-Surge-Amid-Burnout-Britain-Fears), [[4]](https://www.deloitte.com/uk/en/about/press-room/poor-mental-health-costs-uk-employers-51-billion-a-year-for-employees.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/wales/node/3741), [[5]](https://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/blog/ten-workplace-mental-health-statistics-for-2023/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.westfieldhealth.com/blog/the-impact-of-absence-businesses-lose-19-5bn-per-year-to-poor-health), [[7]](https://www.unum.co.uk/about-us/media/mental-health-issues)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060370/Sick-Note-Culture-Mental-Health-Days-Surge-Amid-Burnout-Britain-Fears> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.priorygroup.com/mental-health/stress-treatment/stress-statistics> - A UK-wide stress survey found that 74% of adults have felt so stressed at some point over the past year that they felt overwhelmed or unable to cope. In 2023/24, an estimated 776,000 workers in Great Britain suffered from work-related stress, depression, or anxiety, resulting in 16.4 million working days lost. Stress, depression, or anxiety accounted for 46% of all work-related ill health cases and 54% of all working days lost due to ill health in 2023/24. Work-related stress costs the UK economy £28bn a year.
3. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/wales/node/3741> - In 2022, mental health was the 5th most common reason given for sickness absence, accounting for 7.9% of occurrences. Mental ill health is now the most common cause of work-limiting conditions among those aged 44 years and younger. Over the past decade, the number of workers aged 16–34 years who reported that their mental health limits the type or amount of work they can do has more than quadrupled. In 2022/23, there were an estimated 875,000 workers suffering from work-related stress, depression, or anxiety, resulting in 17.1 million working days lost.
4. <https://www.deloitte.com/uk/en/about/press-room/poor-mental-health-costs-uk-employers-51-billion-a-year-for-employees.html> - Deloitte's report estimates that poor mental health costs UK employers £51 billion annually. The report also explores the impact of children's poor mental health on working parents, finding that 46% of working parents are concerned about their children's mental health, with half of those concerned stating it impacts their performance at work. The report highlights the need for employers to support employees' mental health to improve productivity and reduce absenteeism.
5. <https://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/blog/ten-workplace-mental-health-statistics-for-2023/> - A recent report found that almost half of UK workers are 'running on empty,' with burnout, mental ill health, and work-related stress now costing the economy £28 billion annually. The report highlights that poor mental health accounts for more than half of all work-related illnesses, with around 51% of long-term sick leave due to stress, depression, or anxiety. It also notes that 55% of workers feel that work is getting more intense and demanding, and 61% feel exhausted at the end of most working days.
6. <https://www.westfieldhealth.com/blog/the-impact-of-absence-businesses-lose-19-5bn-per-year-to-poor-health> - In 2023, employees took an average of 4.7 days off due to poor mental health and 5.1 days off due to poor physical health. These absences cost UK businesses around £19.5 billion over the course of the year. The report highlights that mental and physical health are usually treated as separate challenges, requiring different solutions, but suggests that moving more is the most effective intervention when it comes to improving mental health.
7. <https://www.unum.co.uk/about-us/media/mental-health-issues> - Unum UK's research found that one third of surveyed UK employees experienced mental health issues in 2024, with a quarter stating their mental health had worsened over the course of the year. Employees took an average of nine days off for mental health issues in 2024, compared to just four days for general health issues. The report underscores the widespread impact of mental health issues on the workforce and the need for employers to provide support.