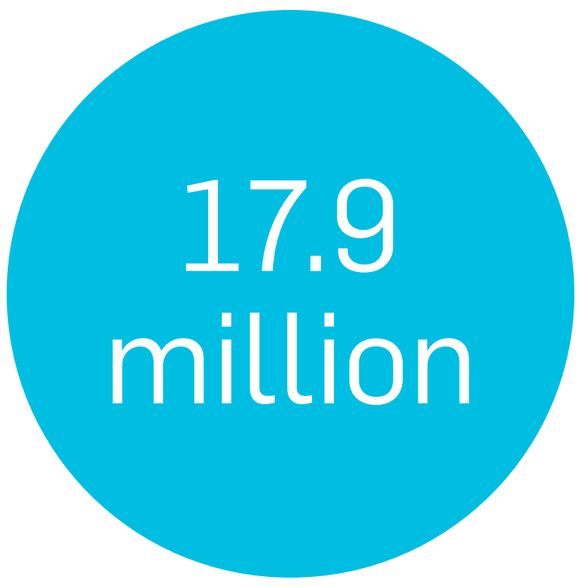
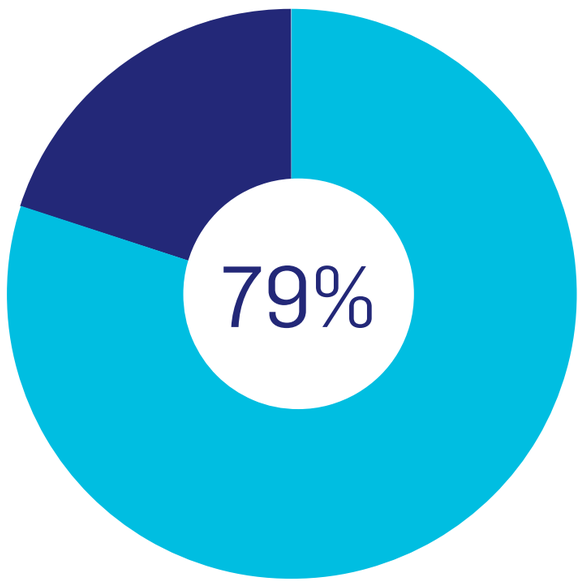
Spotting the signs of stress

The signals employers should look out for in employees – and themselves – to help identify and address workplace stress.

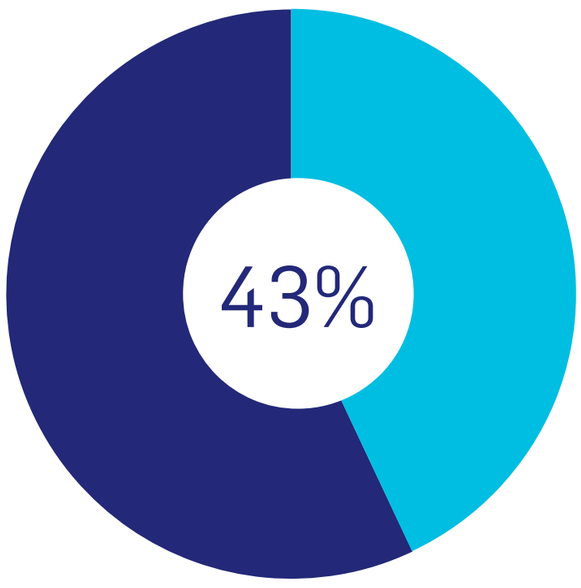
Stressed out: in numbers



working days were lost to stress in 2019/20



of employees say they commonly experience work-related stress



of workers lose sleep as a result of stress in the workplace

Look out for these changes in behaviour

- Irritability, anxiety, lack of focus
- Reduced ability to make decisions
- Drinking or smoking more than usual
- Eating more or less than usual

Questions to ask yourself and your workforce

- Do you find tasks harder than they used to be?
- Are you less productive?
- Are you disproportionately worried about things?
- Have you experienced panic attacks?

How to reach out to your employees

- Make sure staff know you're aware of stress and will take steps to counter it
- Be flexible to individual needs around home/office working
- Ensure a work-life balance is in place with a separate place to work, regular breaks and cut-off times
- Reduce out-of-hours work emails
- Ensure staff know there's no stigma around stress or depression
- Advise them to talk to a GP if they need to

Create a toolkit to reduce stress

- Organise your time
- Take regular breaks
- Know when to say no
- Set achievable targets
- Ask for help where possible
- Don't wait to take time off

Employers should reduce stressors, such as pressure to meet deadlines and excessive workloads

Change the environment

- Introduce walking meetings to get your employees and yourself outside more
- When working from home, encourage employees to talk to friends and colleagues regularly
- Make sure breaks involve movement away from the desk
- Eat well by swapping unhealthy behaviours for better ones

The golden Cs

Communicate with staff so they know you are there for them

Change your environment, your targets, your habits, your well-being

Celebrate work done well and goals achieved

Sources: Acas; AAT; BITC; Caba; CIPD; CIPR; HSE; IoD; Mind; NHS; Perkbox; Time to Change

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