
THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY ON MENTAL HEALTH

an exclusive supplement

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INTRO

Workplace flexibility has become an increasingly important aspect of modern employment, particularly as organisations and employees navigate the challenges of balancing professional responsibilities with personal wellbeing. Flexibility can significantly impact mental health, both positively and negatively, and this impact can vary across different levels within an organisation.

Understanding these variations is *crucial* for developing effective strategies to support mental health in the workplace.

OVERALL IMPACT

Overall, workplace flexibility can greatly benefit mental health by reducing stress, enhancing work-life balance, and providing employees with greater control over their schedules.

Flexible working arrangements, such as remote work and flexible hours, can help employees manage personal responsibilities alongside their professional duties, leading to reduced stress and increased job satisfaction. For many, the ability to work from home or adjust working hours can alleviate the pressure of commuting, allow more time for family and personal activities, and create a more comfortable working environment.

However, flexibility can also have negative impacts on mental health if not managed properly. The lack of clear boundaries between work and personal life can lead to overwork and burnout. Some employees may struggle with feelings of isolation and disconnection from their colleagues, which can contribute to anxiety and depression. Therefore, while flexibility has the potential to enhance mental health, it requires careful implementation and support from employers to ensure it does not inadvertently harm employees' wellbeing.



1 in 4 adults experiences at least one diagnosable mental health problem in any given year.

NHS

IMPACT ACROSS DIFFERENT ROLES

The impact of workplace flexibility on mental health can vary significantly depending on an employee's role within the organisation. Each level faces unique challenges and opportunities related to flexibility.

DIRECTOR / C-SUITE

For Director and C-suite executives, flexibility can be a double-edged sword.

On one hand, the ability to control their schedules and work environments can reduce stress and improve work-life balance. However, the high level of responsibility and the need for constant availability can lead to increased pressure and difficulty switching off from work. Executives may experience stress from the expectation to be available at all times, potentially leading to burnout if they do not set firm boundaries.

Notably, **21%** of respondents in Director /C-suite roles reported that remote working has negatively impacted their mental health, highlighting the stress associated with their high-level duties.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Senior Managers often benefit from flexible work arrangements by being able to balance their demanding roles with personal commitments. However, they can also face significant stress due to the need to manage teams effectively in a flexible environment.

The pressure to maintain productivity and lines of communication within their teams, especially across different time zones, can contribute to mental strain.

Senior Managers must navigate the challenges of supporting their teams while also taking care of their own mental health.

Approximately **24%** of Senior Management reported negative impacts on their mental health from remote working, reflecting the complexity of their roles and the additional stressors they face.

IMPACT ACROSS DIFFERENT ROLES CONT.

MANAGEMENT:

Managers at the middle level can experience both the benefits and drawbacks of flexibility. The ability to adjust their schedules to meet both work and personal needs can reduce stress and enhance job satisfaction.

However, managers are often responsible for ensuring that their teams remain productive and engaged, which can be challenging in a flexible work environment. The need to coordinate schedules, manage remote teams, and maintain accountability can lead to increased stress if not managed effectively.

In this group, only **13%** of respondents reported that remote working negatively impacted their mental health, suggesting that while they face challenges, the benefits of flexibility may outweigh the negatives for many managers.

NON-MANAGEMENT:

For Non-management employees, flexibility usually has a more straightforward positive impact on mental health. The ability to work from home and adjust working hours can significantly reduce stress and improve work-life balance.

However, these employees might also experience feelings of isolation and disconnection from their colleagues, which can affect their mental wellbeing. Ensuring regular communication and fostering a sense of community within remote teams is vital to mitigate these negative effects.

About **24%** reported negative mental health impacts from remote working, indicating that while flexibility is beneficial, it also presents significant challenges that need to be addressed.

BENEFITS OF FLEXIBLE WORKING ON MENTAL HEALTH

Flexible working has been incredibly helpful to many people. Think parents, those with illnesses, Neurodiverse and disabled individuals, people balancing their personal lives and commitments outside of their responsibilities at work. We've broken down some of the main benefits of flexible working into our main categories below.

NON-MANAGEMENT

- 1. Reduced stress & burnout:** Flexibility allows non-management employees to better manage their work and personal lives.
- 2. Improved work-life balance:** Having control over their schedules enables employees to attend to personal matters.
- 3. Increased job satisfaction:** When employees have the freedom to choose when and where they work, they often experience greater satisfaction and a sense of control.
- 4. Better focus & productivity:** Flexibility allows employees to work during their most productive hours, which can enhance focus and reduce anxiety about meeting deadlines.
- 5. Reduced commute:** More time to rest and partake in activities/ hobbies outside of work.

MANAGEMENT

- 1. Enhanced team morale:** Flexibility within teams fosters a supportive and positive environment, reducing the pressure on managers.
- 2. Decreased micromanagement:** There's a bigger focus on outcomes rather than rigid processes, reducing the stress associated with micromanagement and allowing managers to trust their teams more. The benefits of this flow through to employees too.
- 3. Better work-life integration:** Managers can better integrate their professional responsibilities with personal life and spend less time trying to maintain a perfect work-life balance.
- 4. Empowerment and autonomy:** Having the ability to set flexible schedules can empower managers, leading to greater job satisfaction and reduced anxiety.
- 5. Improved relationships:** Flexible work arrangements often lead to improved communication and stronger relationships within teams.

BENEFITS TO MENTAL HEALTH CONT.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT

1. **Lowered pressure:** Flexibility helps senior managers manage the pressures of their roles by allowing them to work in environments that reduce stress and enhance focus.
2. **Mental resilience:** Being able to adjust their schedules to fit their personal needs, reduces the risk of burnout.
3. **Better strategic thinking:** With less stress and more control over their work environment, senior managers can engage in clearer, more strategic thinking, which is crucial for decision-making.
4. **Work-life synergy:** Just like other employees, flexibility enables senior managers to find synergy between their work and personal lives.
5. **Positive role modelling:** By embracing flexibility, senior managers can model healthy work habits for their teams, promoting a culture of wellbeing.

DIRECTOR / C-SUITE

1. **Improved mental health leadership:** Leaders who work flexibly are better equipped to advocate for mental health initiatives within their business, setting a tone of prioritising well-being at all levels.
2. **Stress reduction:** The flexibility to manage their demanding roles in a way that suits their personal preferences can significantly reduce stress and prevent executive burnout.
3. **Enhanced decision-making:** With a clearer mind, C-suite leaders can make more thoughtful, strategic decisions that benefit the entire organisation.
4. **Work-life synergy:** Just like other employees, flexibility enables Directors / C-Suite to find synergy between their work and personal lives.
5. **Sustained energy and focus:** By managing their time and environment to suit their needs, C-suite executives can maintain higher energy levels and better focus, which is essential for their high-stakes roles.



Wellbeing is a Skill. When we cultivate healthy habits of mind, our brains and bodies change.

**R. DAVIDSON,
PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY**

CONCLUSION



Prioritising mental wellbeing in the workplace isn't just a nice-to-have; it's essential.

Workplace flexibility has the potential to significantly enhance mental health by providing all employees with greater control over their schedules and reducing stress associated with commuting and balancing work with personal life.

However, the impact of flexibility on mental health varies across different levels within an organisation.

- **Directors and Senior Managers** may face increased pressure and stress due to high responsibilities.
- **Middle managers** must balance their own wellbeing with managing their teams effectively.
- **Non-management** employees generally benefit from flexibility but need support to prevent isolation and maintain connection with colleagues.

By understanding these nuances, organisations can develop tailored strategies to support mental health and maximise the benefits of workplace flexibility.

When employees feel mentally healthy, they're more engaged, productive, and creative. It's important to create an environment where open communication, balance, and support are the norms. Simple steps like taking regular breaks, managing workloads effectively, and fostering a culture of understanding can make a world of difference.

Encourage team members to speak up about their mental health needs and offer resources like counselling, mental health days, and wellness programs. Remember, investing in mental wellbeing isn't just about avoiding burnout—it's about building a resilient, motivated team that performs at its best. A workplace that values mental health is one where everyone can truly thrive.

Enhanced communication, effective management training and robust feedback mechanisms can help bridge the gap between different levels of the organisation, ensuring that flexibility supports rather than undermines mental health.

Ultimately, a well-implemented flexible work policy can lead to a more engaged, productive, and mentally healthy workforce.

SUPPORT & RESOURCES

Together we can remove the stigma surrounding mental health for everyone.

Look after yourself, look after your loved ones and strangers alike.

Support looks different to everyone. We've listed some starting points below...

> [Helplines](#)

> Mental Health Organisations:

[Mind](#), [CALM](#), [Rethink Mental Illness](#), [Mental Health Foundation](#), [Samaritans](#)

> [NHS resources - information, tools & guidance](#)

> [Seeking help, perhaps for the first time](#)

> [Managing and reducing stress](#)

> [Mental health and work](#)

> [Discrimination at work](#)

> [Helping others with stress](#)

> Apps & digital resources:

[Headspace](#), [Calm](#), [Thrive](#), [Finch](#), [My Possible Self](#)

Community

> [Side by side - Mind](#)



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