

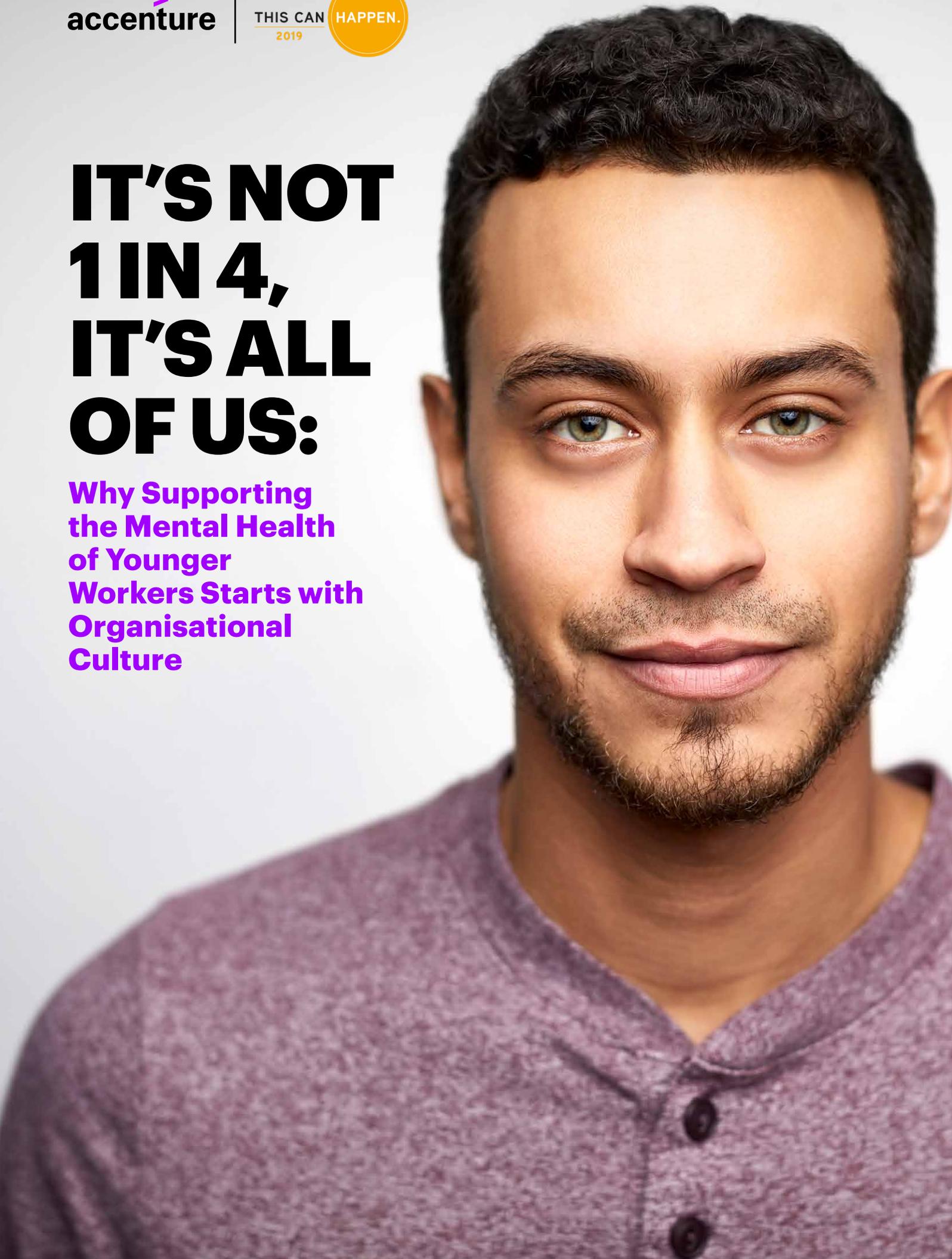
accenture

THIS CAN
2019

HAPPEN.

IT'S NOT 1 IN 4, IT'S ALL OF US:

Why Supporting
the Mental Health
of Younger
Workers Starts with
Organisational
Culture





Zoe Sinclair
Founder of *This Can Happen*

We launched *This Can Happen* in 2018 with the goal of advancing workplace mental health and providing solutions to help employers and employees alike.

A big part of this endeavour has involved working with our partner, Accenture, to develop robust research programmes that will give rise to new insights, challenging current thinking and enabling organisations make good decisions about their support of mental health based on facts. Last year, towards that end, we published the ground-breaking report, *It's Not 1 in 4, It's All of Us*.



Jonny Benjamin
Founder of *This Can Happen*

Now we are proud to present our 2019 report, which homes in on mental health and young people in the workplace. Our findings confirm that the views and attitudes of young people towards work and their mental health are not only changing but also pose new challenges for recruiters, employers, and managers. Critically, this research documents the need for more supportive and inclusive organisational cultures.



Neil Laybourn
Founder of *This Can Happen*

We would like to thank Barbara Harvey and her team for once again putting their hard work into producing an outstanding collection of insights that will further the case for advancing mental health provision in the workplace.



Olly Benzecry
Chairman and Managing Director, Accenture, UK & Ireland

At Accenture, we strive every day to put inclusion and diversity at the heart the way we work, think and run our business. An essential part of this is creating an environment where people can confidently be themselves, feel included, speak up and feel supported. The mental wellbeing of our people – especially our younger people – is therefore a real concern to us. And the extent of mental-health challenges revealed by this research makes this a leadership issue of the highest priority for all of us.

The good news from our research is that, as leaders, we can have a huge impact. In more supportive organisations, we found that employees were four times more likely to say that work has a positive impact on their mental wellbeing. They were less likely to have had recent mental health challenges, and were better able to cope at work when their mental health wasn't at its best.

My hope is that this report will provide a catalyst for all businesses to see the priority and grasp the opportunity to make a difference.

SUMMARY

By the time they reach 30, 95 percent of workers in the UK will have been touched by mental health challenges — either their own, or those of a friend, family member, or co-worker.

Three out of four will have personally experienced such a challenge. These individuals are also almost twice as likely as their more senior peers to be experiencing issues with their mental health *right now*.

Yet according to the findings of our 2019 research, younger workers are more hesitant than their older peers to tell employers what's going on. This is as they additionally perceive more pressures in general (almost 43 percent more) in their lives than older workers. Topping their list of frequent concerns is working under pressure (with 40 percent of our study participants citing it as a primary recurring issue). Worrying about their own health (39 percent), and worrying about someone else's health (32 percent) followed. Younger workers are also more likely than their more senior peers to be struggling with debt or to pay bills.

It's a troubling state of affairs. Especially as just six in ten of our 18–25 year old respondents (and fewer than half of those aged 26–30) reported having received any training, information or advice about taking care of their mental health before entering the workplace.

If employers want a healthy, happy workforce they need to fill that gap. But it has been two years since the publication of the Stevenson–Farmer

review, which estimated that poor mental health costs UK employers up to £42 billion every year. And fewer than half of the workers in our study can say with certainty that their organisation offers any formal support around mental health.

The good news is that employers are increasingly aware of the need to address mental health and, in that spirit, willing to take action. And there is great reason to be optimistic about the impact that companies can have. In organisations that are getting mental health support right — where that support is an integral part of the company's culture — our findings show that **workers of all ages are almost four times more likely to say that work has a positive influence on their mental health**. In those same cultures, **young workers were almost 37 percent less likely to have recent experience of a mental health challenge**.

In this second report prepared by Accenture for *This Can Happen*, we look more closely at the role of company culture and its impact on younger workers. Based on our research findings, we also outline steps that companies can take to improve mental health support for younger workers, benefiting all of their employees in the process.



MORE THAN 9 IN 10

In our research for This Can Happen¹ last year (2018), we set out to understand how mental health touches the lives of workers across the UK. What we found differed significantly from the much-cited figure that “1 in 4” people experience mental health challenges.

In fact, based on interviews with 2170 employees across the UK, we learned that mental health challenges touch 9 in 10 people — either directly, or through a friend, family member, or colleague’s challenge.

This year, combining those findings with 1714 new interviews conducted in August 2019, we see a similar picture; in fact, it’s slightly worse.

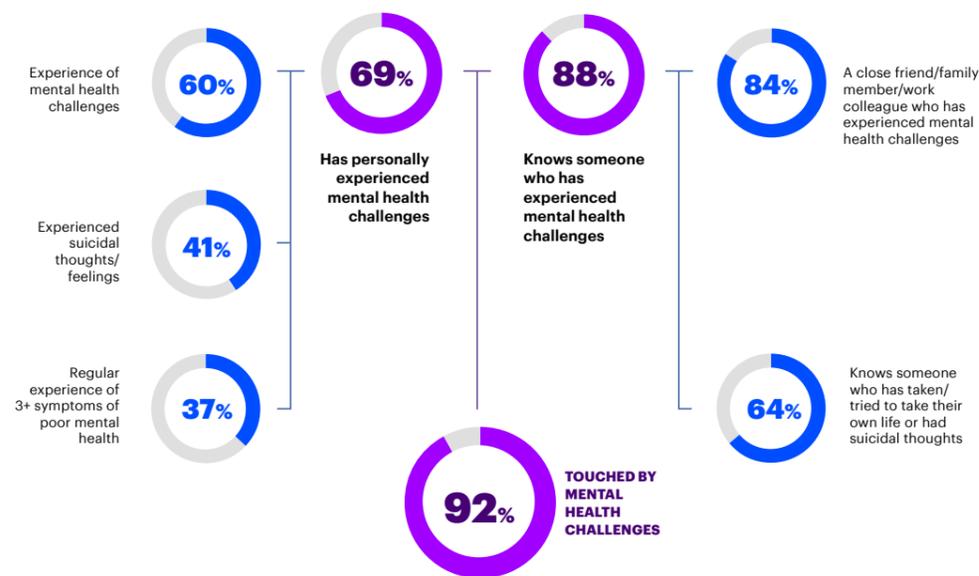
Sixty-nine percent of employees participating have been personally impacted. These individuals reported three or more signs of poor or declining mental health or told us directly that

they have experienced or are currently experiencing mental health challenges or said that they have had suicidal thoughts or feelings.

Eighty-eight percent said someone close to them had been impacted. These individuals knew of a close friend, a colleague, or a family member who has experienced mental health challenges or has tried to take, or taken, their own life.

Overall? More than 9 in 10 people (92 percent) who participated in our study have been touched by mental health challenges in some way.

Chart 1: More than 9 in 10 employees have been touched by mental health challenges.



Combined data from 2018-19; Excluded 'do not know' / 'prefer not to say'
Base: All respondents: (All workers): N=3863

¹ <https://www.tchevents.com/>

ON THE DIFFICULT TOPIC OF SUICIDE

In 2018, 6,507 deaths were attributed to suicide in the UK. Three quarters of all deaths by suicide are men, and an increase in male suicides (to 17.2 deaths per 100,000 in 2018) underlies the first overall increase in suicide rates since 2013. And despite having a low number of deaths overall, rates among people under 25 years old have generally increased in recent years. In particular, among 10–24 year old females, the rate has increased since 2012 to a high in 2018, with 3.3 deaths per 100,000 females that year².

We wanted to learn more about this difficult topic, but we were also keenly aware that asking about anything as distressing and tragic as suicide is difficult to do in any situation, let alone in a questionnaire. So in our survey, we turned here last, telling respondents what the upcoming section was about and then explicitly asking whether they wanted to continue or skip to the end.

We were grateful that the vast majority (82 percent) across both our 2018 and 2019 surveys chose to continue.

In that section, we asked: “Do you know anyone who has experienced suicidal thoughts and feelings or who has taken their own life?” Overall, 64 percent (69 percent of younger workers) said yes. 29 percent (23 percent of younger workers) said they knew someone who had taken their own life. (Among LGBT+ workers the figures were higher still at 81 percent overall and 31 percent knowing someone who had taken their own life.)

Our second question was: “Have you ever personally experienced suicidal thoughts and feelings?” We did not seek to define ‘suicidal thoughts and feelings’; we simply gave the option for respondents to answer “yes”, “no”, or not to answer. Forty one percent of the workers answering the question said “yes”. Breaking that figure down, the “yes” answers represented 48 percent of those aged 18–30.

“Yes” answers also represented 65 percent of LGBT+ workers. There are very few published statistics against which to compare these results. However, Stonewall³ (the charity that campaigns for LGBT rights in the UK) reported that in the year leading up to its 2018 survey, 31 percent of LGB and 46 percent of trans individuals attempted to take their own life.

Our figures point to the importance of educating employees and managers about mental health and suicide prevention. They should know the warning signs of suicide; they should be equipped with the confidence to ask directly when they are concerned about someone. Everyone in the workplace should know how to get help in an emergency.

² **ONS Suicide Report for 2018** <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/suicidesintheunitedkingdom/latest>
³ **Stonewall LGBT in Britain – Health, 2018** <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/lgbt-britain-health>

PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR WORK

Most mental health conditions manifest themselves before people begin work or early in their working lives.

The World Health Organisation estimates that 10–20 percent of children and adolescents worldwide experience mental challenges. Half of all mental illnesses are thought to begin by the age of 14 and three-quarters by their mid-20s⁴.

At university, YouGov⁵ found that one in four students overall (and 34 percent of female students) have a mental health challenge. Meanwhile, the City Mental Health Alliance (CMHA)⁶ reported in August 2019 that 69 percent of job-seeking students and graduates say they have lived, or are living, with mental health issues.

Yet among the youngest workers in our study (ages 18–25) only 18 percent had been given training, information or advice about taking care of their mental wellbeing in primary or secondary school. Just 40 percent had received any training, information or advice about taking care of their mental health at university or college. Overall, half had joined the workforce without receiving any advice at all.

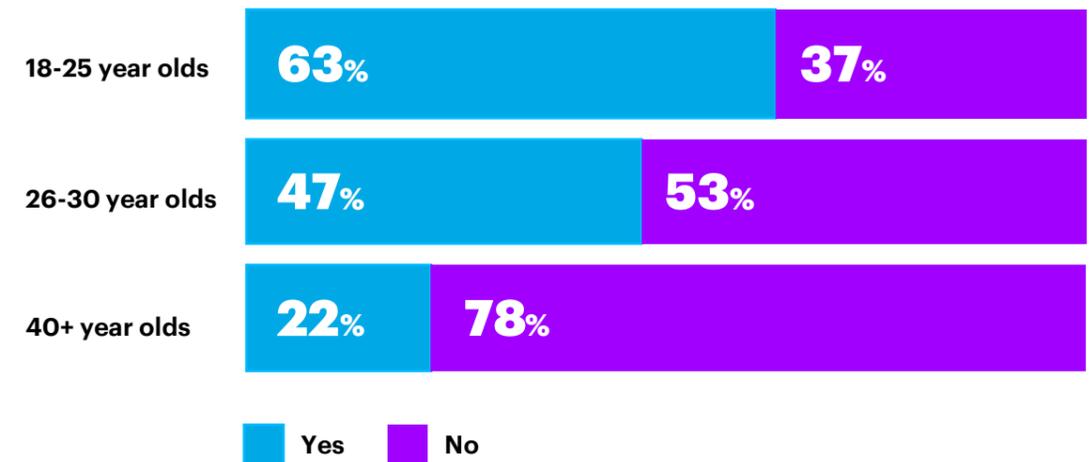
These percentages are worryingly low, and yet there is evidence that things are improving: Among those aged 26–30, half had not been given advice about mental health before starting work. Among those aged 40+, the figure was three-quarters. The younger group, however scant their mental health education, is better prepared than their older colleagues.

One in three of the younger workers in our study, however, said they had felt unprepared for the realities of working life before joining it. This is something that many of the executives we spoke with recognise, and we did identify a few companies that have begun to address this need explicitly.

Boots and Goldman Sachs, for example, work with their respective talent pools in schools and universities to ensure that potential recruits have realistic expectations about work and its associated pressures. Most businesses, however, have not yet ventured far into this territory.

Chart 2: Mental health education is improving, but many workers received no advice about taking care of their mental health before starting work.

Were you given any training, information or advice on how to look after your mental health before starting work?



During the course of our research, we spoke to members of the This Can Happen advisory group and to executives in organisations from different sectors and of different sizes. In the course of these interviews, we found innovative approaches to

employees' mental wellbeing, and in particular, to the mental wellbeing of younger workers. We are most grateful to all we spoke to for their time and support; a full list can be found on page 34.

⁴ Kessler et al, 2007 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1925038/>
⁵ YouGov survey 2016 – 1 in 4 students <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/lifestyle/articles-reports/2016/08/09/quarter-britains-students-are-afflicted-mental-hea>
⁶ City Mental Health Alliance, Making it Work http://citymha.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CMHA_Making-it-Work_Final.pdf

Goldman Sachs CASE STUDY

As well as continuing to provide and enhance wellbeing support for our own people, this year Goldman Sachs launched a new two-year partnership with the mental health charity Mind to reach students and staff in universities given data shows that mental health conditions are on the rise. A number of the firm's Partners, who are passionate about this topic and supporting young people, funded this important work via GS Gives which provides grants to non-profit organisations.

The Mentally Healthy universities programme will reach over 6,000 students and staff at ten universities initially, providing support and specialist training to equip people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to support their own mental health and that of others. Providing tools and information to people before they start their careers, and supporting staff who help students to navigate university life, creates an exciting opportunity to change behaviours and tackle stigma sooner.

As well as focusing on staff in higher education, the programme will connect with first-year students who are beginning their studies and third-year students as they prepare for the transition to work. The response from universities, staff and students has been overwhelming and we aim to learn as much as possible to then identify best practice that can be shared across all universities in future years.

Sally Boyle, International Head of Human Capital Management, Goldman Sachs



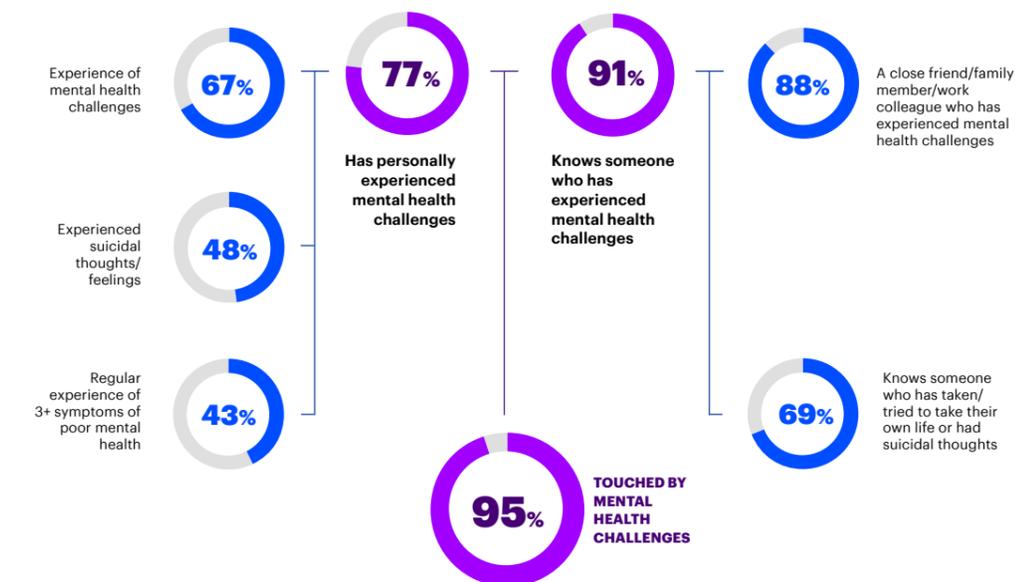
WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE JOIN THE WORKFORCE

As noted, by the time young people join the workforce, many already have experienced mental health challenges.

Just under half (48 percent) of the 18–30 year olds in our study said they had experienced suicidal thoughts and feelings and 77 percent overall have already had personal challenges with their mental health.

Younger workers in our study also reported more recent mental health challenges than did their more senior colleagues.

Chart 3: 77 percent of young workers have personal experience of mental health challenges – and 95 percent have been touched in some way



Combined data from 2018-19; Excluded 'do not know' / 'prefer not to say'
Base: All respondents: (18-30 year olds): N=1346

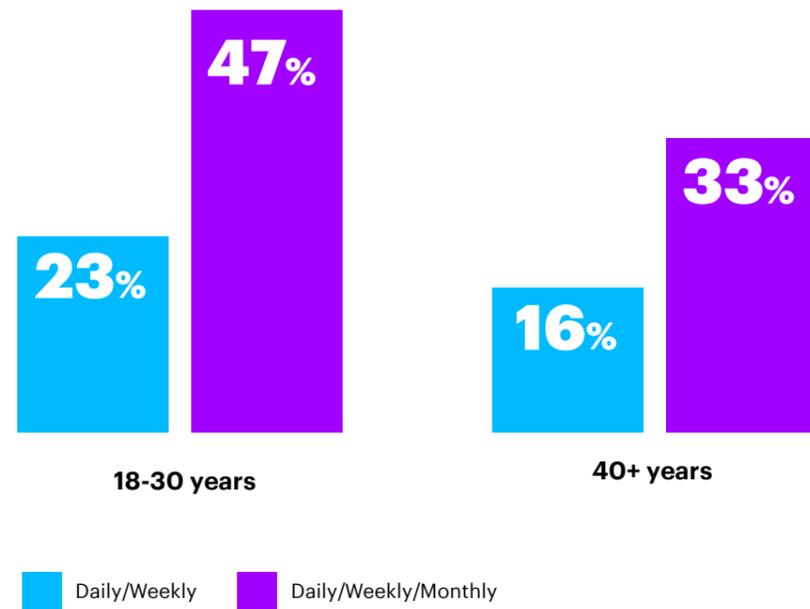
This situation, coupled with the lack of information provided to younger recruits about mental health, sets up a difficult adjustment to employment. Almost all the executives we spoke with commented that younger workers are not often well equipped to handle even the everyday stresses of work, lacking the experience and coping strategies that their more senior colleagues have learned.

And most younger workers (73 percent) reported that they feel they are subject to different kinds of pressure than older generations in the workforce and that those pressures are not well understood by their more senior peers.

They certainly perceive more pressure in their lives than their more senior peers do. We presented a list of factors that are sources of pressure at home and at work such as working long hours, worrying about your – or someone else’s – health or about debt or bills. Just under half of younger workers reported experiencing five or more of these pressures monthly or more often, and one in four experienced such pressure daily or weekly⁷. Younger workers were almost 43 percent more likely to report frequent pressure than their more senior peers.

Chart 4: Young people report more pressures than their more senior colleagues

Proportion of employees who experience five or more pressures (e.g., working long hours, struggling with debt)



⁷ Individuals saying they experienced five or more of a list of pressures either daily, weekly or monthly

Direct Line CASE STUDY

The insurance company Direct Line puts creating an open, friendly culture high on its agenda. Its explicit focus on mental health, however, is relatively new for the organisation. From the start, this focus has been supported by the executive team.

Specifically, the company is replicating the level of support available for physical wellbeing for mental health. It is doing so by switching to an improved Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) by training 1000+ managers in mental health awareness, and by ensuring there is a Mental Health First Aid representative on every floor of every office building. The company’s mental health programme also addresses financial wellbeing (a potential stressor for many individuals). The next step is to develop further training for managers and high-risk populations.

The company recognises the additional pressure that younger workers face. It is also keenly aware that younger workers

have grown up in an environment where the discussion around mental health is more open. They have also heard from younger employees that those workers naturally expect their company to address the issue and support them without being singled out as needing special or different treatment.

“[Mental health challenges] seem to be affecting more younger people in the UK than older people. As a population, they face more challenges, whether financial, in their everyday lives or through the impact of social media. There is a pressure on younger people that more senior employees didn’t face at that time in their lives and they have greater expectations from the workplace which is why we have implemented measures to ensure everyone has access to support.”

Richard Stanbury, Head of Employee Relations and Senior Business Partner, Direct Line Group



Both younger and more senior workers cited 'working under pressure' most frequently among the different types of pressure the survey presented for consideration. But health concerns – of their own (39 percent) and of others (32 percent) – were also remarkably high among the younger workers. Isolation at work and the impact of being away from friends and family also affected

younger workers to a greater extent than older workers.

The pressure workers are feeling originate from both their home and work lives with, of course, the two being interrelated; 60 percent of young employees and more than half overall experience work-related pressures on a daily or weekly basis.

Chart 5: Pressures affecting employees weekly or more often

Workers aged 18-30		Workers aged 40+	
Working under pressure	40%	Working under pressure	42%
Worrying about own health (physical/mental)	39%	Worrying about own health (physical/mental)	32%
Worrying about the health of someone close to them	32%	Worrying about the health of someone close to them	26%
Working long hours	26%	Working long hours	25%
Feeling isolated and lonely at work	24%	Feeling isolated and lonely at work	19%
Experiencing negative emotions due to be away from friends and family	20%		
Having to pretend to 'be someone else' at work	22%		

Young workers are also more likely to find it difficult to pay their bills (8 percent) and to be struggling with debt (14 percent)

The issue of disclosure adds another level of pressure – and complexity. In the CMHA's study⁸ 64 percent of students and graduates believed disclosing past or current mental health issues would hinder their chances of securing a first job in financial, legal and professional services.

However, 45 percent of this youngest cohort of workers (18–25) said they hold back because they lack the language to express what's happening. That's twice as many as say this aged 40+.

Our own study found that those aged 18–25 were the least likely to tell someone at work that they were experiencing issues with their mental health.

Unilever CASE STUDY

Unilever is the consumer goods company behind some of the world's best-known brands. As a major UK employer in a fast-moving sector the company recognises that the workplace can be a pressured environment. Unilever is a leading partner in the Inclusive Economy Partnership's work on mental health which brings together business, society and the Government to drive corporate commitments to support employee wellbeing and share best practice.

Its comprehensive wellbeing programme embraces all aspects of life in the company and has committed that every employee, globally, should be no more than one chat, one call or one click from the support they need. To deliver this Unilever provides access to confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The company also has an established range of support services and tools, as well as an openness to piloting new strategies to understand their efficacy.

One approach they have adopted is that of the Wellbeing Passport, adapted from Mind's Wellness Action Plans⁹. The Wellbeing Passport is used by new joiners to articulate how they like to work, what helps them work well and what holds them back.

The passports provide a framework for a conversation between the colleague and line manager that moves with them as they grow in the business.

Unilever sees the challenges young people – particularly apprentices – face in joining the workforce and making the transition to independence. For apprentices the emphasis is on creating a social peer network that mirrors what they would have found at university, offering mentors and buddies to coach and support them, as well as somewhere to have fun and build new friendships.

"We want to help our younger colleagues develop ways to cope with the pressures of working in a fast-moving, ever-changing environment. For example, we coach them to be themselves, how to say no in the right way and that it's ok to fail. We all benefit from learning how to spot and manage the things that cause us stress, whether in work or outside, and knowing when – and how – to get help is key."

Richard Sharp, VP HR, Unilever UK & Ireland

THE GREAT IMPACT OF WORKPLACE CULTURE — REGARDLESS OF EMPLOYEE AGE

In our 2018 study, we saw that a supportive, open culture around mental health at work makes a significant difference to the way employees feel and their ability to thrive.

For example, we saw that in organisations with a supportive mental health culture, employees find it easier to talk about mental health. They were also more likely to have spoken to someone in their organisation about their challenge, and to know where to go to get help and advice.

This year's study built on our initial findings. (The sidebar explains how we identified "supportive mental health cultures".) While it was impossible from our data to prove a causal relationship, we found that the incidence of employees with recent or current

experience of a mental health challenge was lower in the more supportive cultures. This was especially true for younger workers, with 41 percent reporting recent challenges in the most supportive cultures, and 65 percent reporting recent challenges in the least supportive cultures.

Not only is the incidence of mental health challenges lower in these more supportive organisations, but also those who work in such cultures are almost four times more likely to say that work influences their mental wellbeing in a positive way.

IDENTIFYING WORKPLACE CULTURES THAT ARE MOST SUPPORTIVE OF MENTAL WELLBEING

As in our 2018 study, this year we measured the extent of workers' agreement with a series of statements around their employer's attitudes and approach to mental health:

- Where I work people have a work-life balance that supports good mental health;
- Where I work, people who are going through a challenging time with their mental health are supported;
- People feel safe to raise concerns about their mental health in my organisation;
- People at my work feel they have to hide any mental health challenges;
- Where I work, mental health challenges would be considered a weakness;
- Where I work, disclosing mental health challenges would impact my career/stop me from getting a promotion.

Approximately 10 percent of respondents said their working environments were positive on all aspects; we call these "more supportive". And approximately 10 percent of respondents said their working environments were negative on all aspects; we call these "less supportive".

The supportive nature of these organisations also appears to be helping those with mental health conditions to cope with their challenges better at work.

Eighty-four percent of workers in the most supportive cultures agreed that they felt able to cope with any mental health challenges they had while at work.

In the least supportive organizations, 46 percent felt they were able to cope with their challenges at work. Respondents working in the most supportive cultures also reported feeling better able to cope with the everyday stresses of work than others (91 percent versus 51 percent).

Chart 6: In supportive cultures, employees tend to experience better mental health outcomes

IN LESS SUPPORTIVE ORGANISATIONS		IN MORE SUPPORTIVE ORGANISATIONS
58%	Employees have a recent history of mental health challenges	34%
46%	Employees are able to cope at work with any mental health challenges they have	84%
51%	Employees are able to cope with the everyday stresses of work	91%
81%	Employees experience one or more work-related pressures on a daily or weekly basis	35%
16%	Employees say work impacts their mental health in a positive way	63%

Among all ages of worker there were lower reported rates of working under pressure in the most inclusive environments (24 percent versus 66 percent) and of working long hours (15 percent versus 40 percent).

Furthermore, in the most supportive environments, workers were seven times less likely to say that they felt lonely and isolated at work.



THE NEED TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH AND FOCUS ON CULTURE

Companies are increasingly aware of the need to support mental health and focus on culture as a means to that end – but progress has been slow

Without doubt, businesses in the UK are increasingly aware of the need to address mental health in their workplaces. The financial business case alone would provide a compelling reason to act. (The Stevenson–Farmer review *Thriving at Work*¹⁰, released in 2017, put the annual cost to employers between £33 billion and £42 billion).

But, increasingly, businesses are looking at mental health in the wider context of building more inclusive and diverse workplace cultures to strengthen their businesses, attract the best talent, increase diversity of thought, and become more innovative.

Accenture’s 2019 Equality=Innovation report¹¹ in fact showed that in the most inclusive and diverse cultures, employees’ willingness and ability to innovate is 11 times higher than in the least inclusive and diverse organisations.

However, fewer than half (47 percent) of the employees in our survey were certain that their employer offered a programme or support around mental health. That’s a disappointing result almost two years to the day after the publication of *Thriving at Work*, which at the time reported that only four in ten organisations (39 percent) had policies or systems in place to support employees with common mental health conditions.

¹⁰ *Thriving at Work* – The Stevenson-Farmer Review, October 2017 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/658145/thriving-at-work-stevenson-farmer-review.pdf
¹¹ *Getting to Equal 2019* - How Culture Drives Innovation, Accenture 2019 https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/thought-leadership-assets/pdf/accenture-equality-equals-innovation-gender-equality-research-report-iwd-2019.pdf

IN THE MOST SUPPORTIVE CULTURES, LEADERS ACT DIFFERENTLY

Companies looking to make their cultures more inclusive and supportive might first look to the leadership team. In the most supportive cultures, we found, leaders act differently than those at the helm of less-supportive organisations.

For example, employees in supportive cultures were 26 times more likely to say that leaders are visible in supporting those with mental health challenges. Almost 9 in 10 employees said leaders are 'open, warm and human' when it comes to employee mental health.

Almost the same number reported that there is a senior person in the organisation who genuinely cares about their wellbeing and that there is someone senior they could turn to for help with a mental health challenge.

Chart 7: According to their employees, leaders of supportive organisations act very differently

IN LESS SUPPORTIVE ORGANISATIONS		IN MORE SUPPORTIVE ORGANISATIONS
5%	Workers say senior leaders are 'open, warm and human' when it comes to employee mental health	88%
23%	Workers say there's a senior person who genuinely cares about their wellbeing	82%
17%	Workers say there's a senior person to whom they could turn for help with a mental health challenge	87%
2%	Workers say senior leaders are visible in supporting those with mental health challenges	53%
1%	Workers say senior leaders talk openly about their own mental health challenges (or those of their friends or family)	31%
5%	Workers say senior leaders warn of the dangers of overworking and stress	40%

We also asked our survey respondents to imagine if a senior leader in their organisation were to speak openly about a challenge they have/have had with their own mental health, and to tell us how they would view that leader. Most employees, but particularly the younger employees, agreed that good leaders should not be afraid to show that they are human.

They agreed that the leader in question would be a stronger leader for having the courage to talk about their mental health.

They also said that having a leader who spoke openly would encourage more people in their organisation to share their own mental health challenges.

Chart 8: Younger workers respect leaders who are open

Proportion of employees who believe that...

...good leaders are not afraid to show that they are human



...someone would be a stronger leader for having the courage to talk about their mental health challenges



...if senior leaders spoke openly about their own mental health, then more people in the organisation would feel able to share their own mental health challenges



Workers aged 18-30 Workers aged 40+

EMPLOYEES WITHIN MORE SUPPORTIVE ORGANISATIONS FEEL A GREATER SENSE OF BELONGING

As organisations consider the kind of culture they are seeking to build, another aspect to pay close attention to is whether employees feel a sense of being ‘at home’ at work. That is, do they feel settled? Do they feel as if they belong?

We asked employees a range of questions specifically about their sense of belonging and their ability to be themselves in the workplace.

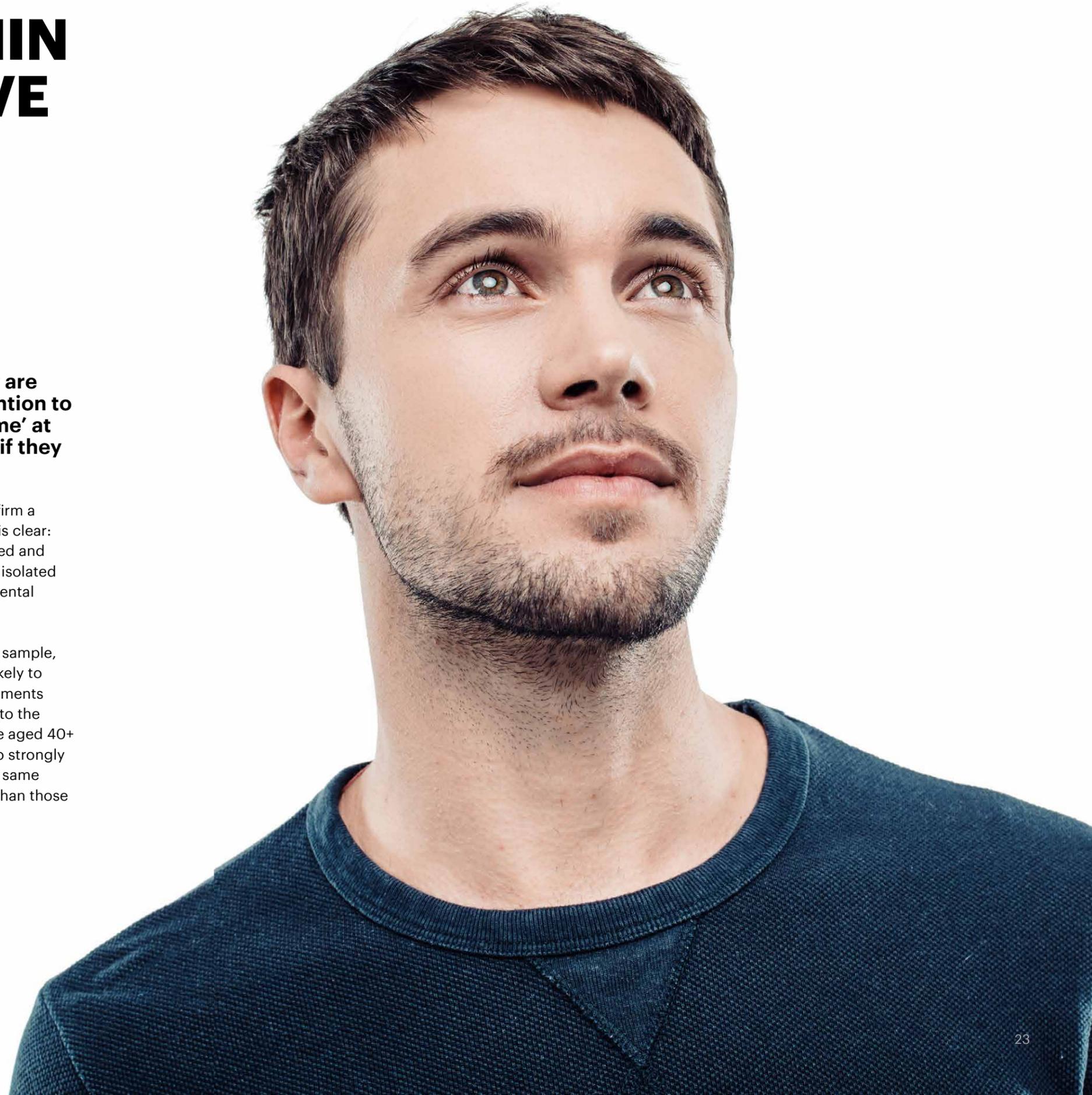
For example, we asked them whether they felt able to be the same person at work as they were outside of work, whether they had a colleague in whom they could confide, and whether they felt it was ok to make mistakes sometimes or to have a bad day.

And what we found was a strong correlation between having a sense of belonging and having recent experience of a mental health challenge.

Those who don’t feel at home in the workplace are nearly three times more likely to have recently experienced a mental health challenge.

It is again impossible to confirm a causal effect, but the signal is clear: helping employees feel settled and ensuring they don’t become isolated during an episode of poor mental health is essential.

The youngest workers in our sample, aged 18–25, were the least likely to agree strongly with the statements above (possibly attributable to the length of their tenure). Those aged 40+ were almost twice as likely to strongly agree that they could be the same person at work and outside than those aged 18–25.



THREE STEPS TOWARDS BUILDING A SUPPORTIVE CULTURE

Although most younger workers may not have received adequate training about how to look after their mental health, they do care deeply about the topic.

Eight out of ten take at least some steps towards maintaining good mental health, with getting good sleep, taking regular exercise, eating well and spending time outdoors being their go-to practices.

Importantly, when respondents indicated that they were not doing any of the steps we listed as ways to maintain good mental health, we then asked what stops them from doing more. The most frequent answer (given by 41 percent of that group) was that they *'don't really know what works.'*

The companies we spoke with during our research, like the young people themselves, want to act but are also unsure of what REALLY works.

The answers may become quite clear in the longer-term; the World Economic Forum, in 'Empowering 8 Billion Minds',¹² highlights how AI and big data may lead to better understanding over time. But as our research findings suggest, there are steps companies can take now to great effect.

Specifically, we recommend a three-pronged approach: start at the top with a focus on leaders; fill the knowledge gap in peoples' understanding of mental wellbeing and mental ill health; and co-create (with employees and other companies) to provide practical workplace interventions and support. At a more granular level, here is a series of actions companies can take to get things moving in the right direction:

1. Start at the top with a focus on leaders

1.1 Address workplace culture as a strategic imperative, because this is the starting point for creating the right support around mental wellbeing. A supportive culture around mental health does not exist in isolation; it's an integral part of the overall culture of the organisation, what it feels like to work there, whether employees feel included, respected, fairly treated, and able to be themselves.

Simply Business CASE STUDY

Simply Business is the UK's biggest small-business insurance provider. It has twice topped the list of The Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to Work For and is now a certified B Corp, meaning that it focuses as much on positive social and environmental impact as profit. The company puts culture at the top of its leadership agenda and believes that creating an environment where people can truly be themselves drive business outcomes.

Simply Business uses innovative technology, an experimental culture, and a learning agenda to enable employees — including those in their call centre — to have more control and flexibility over where, how, and when they work, without reducing pay.

And when it comes to mental wellbeing, leadership sets the tone. Take the company's Mental Health Awareness Week storytelling program. General Counsel and Company Secretary Joanne Theodoulou, along with other leaders, launched a story-sharing site by sharing their own mental health stories with the whole company. Others soon followed their lead, with the thread of stories growing over the week, bringing in many who had never spoken openly before.

"The key is a culture of trust. It's all about creating an organisation where people can truly be themselves and living those values for real every day."

Joanne Theodoulou, General Counsel and Company Secretary, Simply Business

1.2 Engage the whole senior leadership team. In the more supportive cultures that we identified, senior leaders were behaving in a significantly different way than in other organisations; they were openly talking about mental health and actively leading by example. Senior leaders should strive to be open and prepared to show vulnerability. Showing that they genuinely care for the young people in the organisation will drive change.

1.3 Implement the recommendations of the Stevenson–Farmer Review and sign up to the six-step commitment as set out in the Mental Health at Work Commitment (<https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/commitment>). The Mental Health at Work Gateway (<https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk>) offers a rich source of advice, templates and case studies for organisations setting out on, or wanting to progress, their mental health journey.

2. Fill in the knowledge gaps, and give people the language to express how they feel

2.1 Ensure that the workplace culture signals support of mental health and wellbeing from the word go, with schools and universities, during the recruiting process, during orientation, as well as once employees are fully on the job.

2.2 Build programmes that help employees understand how to take better care of their mental health in a holistic way, for example by embracing the principles outlined in the NHS Five Steps to Mental Wellness and similar frameworks. These principles are:

- **Connect with other people:** In our research we found that younger workers were spending more than half of their time (at work and at home) in front of a screen where there was no face-to-face interaction with others. Around 1 in 4 reported feeling lonely and isolated at work on a weekly or daily basis. Only five percent limited their screen time as part of mental wellbeing practices.
- **Be active:** Although high on the list of steps they took, still only just over a third of young workers said they took regular physical exercise in an effort to keep their minds healthy. The benefits of exercise for mental – not just physical – health, may not be well known to them.
- **Be mindful:** Less than a third of young workers (aged 18–30) spent time outdoors or in nature; 11 percent practice yoga, mindfulness or meditation. Only 12 percent limit their working hours.
- **Keep learning:** Many younger workers will be learning through study and at work, but just one in five say they have an absorbing hobby such as singing, playing music or sport that helps them maintain a healthy mind
- **Give to others:** Three percent cited volunteering as one of their practices.

2.3 Give young people the language to express how they feel and create opportunities where it's normal to discuss stress and mental wellbeing. Most young people being recruited into the workforce (along with those already in the workforce) are still unsure whether and how to speak openly about mental health and or disclose a mental health challenge. Unilever's Wellbeing Passport (page 15) is one example of how companies can make the conversation easier.





3. Co-create and tailor solutions, measure their impact

3.1 Conduct research to understand employees' challenges – recognising that these may differ by age and for different populations such as ethnic minorities and LGBT+. An anonymous employee survey can be a good way to start. The Business in the Community Responsible Business Tracker and Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index offer ways to benchmark and track progress.

3.2 Involve employees in the design of solutions to ensure you focus on what matters and that initiatives are tailored to those they are intended to support.

Allen & Overy CASE STUDY

Law firm Allen & Overy takes the mental wellbeing of their employees very seriously indeed, having recently appointed a Partner as global sponsor for mental health. The firm's programming around mental health is comprehensive, spanning everything from practical support and resources to storytelling through 'This is Me'-style videos.

But Allen & Overy also attends explicitly to the needs of its young trainees, who undertake a two-year contract as part of their legal training. The firm co-created a Trainee Wellbeing Group and its first action was to carry out a trainee-wide wellbeing survey, followed by a presentation of the results and a discussion with senior partners.

In response to that survey, the firm has also focused on developing the relationships between trainers and trainees to focus more on the human element of life as a lawyer. The training provided to trainers now emphasises the importance of pastoral care

and mentoring in a high-pressure environment. The degree to which trainees feel able to discuss their wellbeing with their trainers will be measured through upward feedback.

The Group works with the business to tackle concerns raised by the trainees. One recent example: a pilot that designates 'protected evenings' to reduce workflow uncertainty. In parallel, trainees write a biweekly newsletter for their peers that promotes the support and resources available to address key concerns on their agenda.

"As you become more senior you get more control over your work, but trainees can feel like they have to say yes to everything. We know lack of control and uncertainty can negatively impact mental health and that's why this initiative is so important"

Toni Graves, Global Head of Reward & Wellbeing, Allen & Overy

3.3 Offer initiatives targeted at younger employees and at their managers.

Both groups need the knowledge to understand their own mental state, and they need the language to express what they're going through. And the managers who guide and support younger employees, need to be aware of the issues most often faced by those young recruits. They need to know how to support and empower them.

Boots CASE STUDY

Boots has been a household name in the UK for 170 years, its high street pharmacies, opticians and hearing care outlets are familiar sights to us all. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the company's purpose — "Championing everyone's right to feel good"— Boots places significant emphasis on the wellbeing of colleagues as well as its customers through a holistic physical and mental health programme centred on the Five Ways to Wellbeing (based on the same framework used by the NHS).

Boots also works explicitly and intensely with its younger employees (which it calls "Early Careers' workers"), and starts the research needed to support these individuals with outreach to understand what's being taught in schools, higher-education colleges and local universities. It invests time going out into the community to help young people in education to understand what it's really like in the workplace, seeking the help of their own younger employees to get the message across in the right way.

In its Early Careers' programme, Boots addresses coping mechanisms and

uses group discussion to team with their young workforce to give them the skills and confidence they need to work through any issues and raise concerns. Early Careers' tutors are assigned and trained to support younger workers, with safe guarding leads appointed throughout the organisation so that any concerns can quickly be escalated to someone with the right skills to help.

"Boots has a responsibility as an employer to understand what is going to help young people bridge the gap between education and the workplace, to understand what it's really like to come to work, so that when people do join, they have an honest view of what it's like"

Emma Metcalf, Senior Early Careers and Education Manager, Boots

"From talking with our most recent graduate recruits it is clear that our values and wellbeing strategy are influential in their decision to work at Boots."

Patricia Lakin, Colleague Health Manager, Boots

3.4 Measure the impact of what you do. Experiment with, and test, the ideas that come out of co-creation efforts. Build in ways to assess their efficacy from the start. And share what you learn. Write about it; tell This Can Happen about it. The focus on the mental wellbeing of workers is still relatively new to businesses; by sharing what we learn, and with more research, we will accelerate everyone's understanding.

YOUR ORGANISATION CAN MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE

There is a clear need for more (and better) research to understand not only the underlying causes of mental health challenges, but also what are the optimal forms of support for those who are affected by them.

However, it is also possible — and necessary — to make a significant difference right now.

When organisations strive to support their employees' mental health in a holistic way, by focusing on culture changes rather than tactical interventions, and by proactively offering programs tailored to individuals' needs, employees benefit.

In these more supportive environments, the prevalence of mental health challenges declines, workers cope better with everyday stress, and those with mental health conditions can manage better at work.

And employees in these environments seem to know they are great places to work; twice as many say they're very likely still to be with their organisation a year from now.



About this Research

In 2018, Accenture commissioned an online survey of UK workers (full time, self-employed and those working more than 15 hours part-time) aged 18 and over. And in September 2019, Accenture commissioned an online survey of UK workers aged 18–30 and aged 40+. Both surveys were fielded by YouGov, achieving samples of 2170 in 2018 and 1714 in 2019. Where relevant, the data from both years was combined to give larger sample sizes and data over a longer period. The data from 2019 enabled us to make comparisons between younger and more senior employees.

During our research we also interviewed executives from a range of organisations to understand their perspectives on mental health in the workplace, particularly with respect to younger workers. We would like to thank them for their time and contribution to our work.

Enda Egan, Head of Young People's Programme, Mental Health UK
Sarah Hughes, Chief Executive, Centre for Mental Health
Neil Laybourn, Founder, This Can Happen
Katie Legg, Director, Strategy & Partnerships, Mental Health UK
Alison Unsted, Head of Strategy & Operations, City Mental Health Alliance

Jay Brewer, Health & Wellbeing Manager, Unilever
Beth Farrar, UKI Marketing Human Resources Business Partner and Future Careers Lead, Unilever
Shefali Gera, EMEA Head of Inclusion & Diversity & Wellness, Goldman Sachs
Toni Graves, Global Head of Reward & Wellbeing, Allen & Overy
Patricia Lakin, Colleague Health Manager, Boots
Katy Leeson, Managing Director, Social Chain
Emma Metcalf, Senior Early Careers and Education Manager, Boots
Gian Power, Founder & CEO, TLC Lions
Karl Simons, Chief Health, Safety & Security Officer, Thames Water
Richard Stanbury, Head of Employee Relations & Senior Business Partner, Direct Line Group
Joanne Theodoulou, General Counsel & Company Secretary, Simply Business
Alison Thorogood, Learning & Development Manager, Nando's

The research was designed and executed by Accenture Research and led by Barbara Harvey with Mikahla Chapman, Dominic King, Regina Maruca, Sotirios Papoutsis and Simon Tottman.

Appendix: Mental Health at Accenture

- Accenture has a holistic health and wellbeing programme that incorporates physical and mental health and focuses on awareness and prevention. It is part of a broader programme that is designed to create a culture where employees can bring their whole self to work.
- We recognise that there is still a stigma within workplaces and society in general when it comes to talking about mental health and seeking help.
- The mental health programme is sponsored by Managing Director Barbara Harvey, who reports directly into Olly Benzecry, Chairman and Managing Director, Accenture, UK & Ireland on this topic. The UKI leadership team attended a half day mental health awareness workshop.
- A bespoke survey is used every two years to understand the mental wellbeing of our employees and the effectiveness of the interventions we are making.
- We introduced a Mental Health Allies programme to get the message across that it's okay to talk about mental health, and to equip people with the right skills to enable them to support colleagues in need. We already have more than 2000 trained Mental Health Allies throughout our UK business. They have each gone through a half-day classroom-based training session to increase their understanding whilst building confidence and skills in addressing common mental health challenges through roleplaying and scenario training.
- Our Mental Health Allies trainers and key HR professionals are given additional training including the two-day Mental Health First Aid course and Suicide First Aid training.
- Accenture offers a free confidential counselling service available through Bupa, open to all Accenture employees 24/7. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP), can also help employees with a variety of issues such as managing stress in the home or workplace, legal and financial issues and relationship problems.
- Technology plays an important role in our programme: online awareness training is available to all; employees have access to Big White Wall, a confidential, professionally managed chat environment where they can remain anonymous and that can be accessed at all times wherever our employees are, we have developed a mindfulness app and offer access to other apps to support sleep and general wellbeing.
- We increasingly go out to university campuses to speak about our mental health programme and to talk about how to manage mental wellbeing at work. Our graduate recruits join the Analyst Consulting Group (ACG) where we foster an environment of peer support. All new joiners hear about our mental health programme and 26 percent have gone on to become mental health allies. Small employee-led task forces address specific concerns, for example, on managing wellbeing when working out of town.
- Accenture has signed the Time to Change pledge to end the stigma around mental health and is a signatory to the Mental Health at Work Commitment .

About Accenture

Accenture is a leading global professional services company, providing a broad range of services and solutions in strategy, consulting, digital, technology and operations. Combining unmatched experience and specialised skills across more than 40 industries and all business functions – underpinned by the world’s largest delivery network – Accenture works at the intersection of business and technology to help clients improve their performance and create sustainable value for their stakeholders. With 492,000 people serving clients in more than 200 cities in 51 countries, Accenture drives innovation to improve the way the world works and lives. Visit us at www.accenture.com