

Nearly 1 in 5 say their workplace can be toxic, poll finds

July 13 2023, by Cara Murez



About one-fifth of American workers say their workplace is toxic, and

many say their mental health is harmed as a result.

The American Psychological Association (APA) questioned 2,515 employed adults in April for its annual Work in America Survey. Nineteen percent stated that their workplace is very or somewhat toxic.

"The number of individuals who report experiencing a toxic workplace without protection from harm is troubling," said [Arthur Evans Jr.](#), APA's chief executive officer. "No one should feel fear at work. It is clear there is much work to be done to foster a positive work environment for all workers in this nation," he said in an association news release.

"Toxic workplace" is described as a place where infighting, intimidation and other affronts harm productivity. Such places of employment usually see high absenteeism, low productivity and soaring turnover, the report noted.

Mental health is also likely to suffer. More than half (about 52%) of those who reported a toxic workplace felt work had harmed their [mental health](#), compared to 15% of those who reported a healthy workplace.

Some of the other findings:

- About 22% of workers overall said they experienced harm to their mental health at work.
- 22% said they experienced harassment at work in the previous 12 months, up from 14% in 2022.
- 22% said they had witnessed discrimination and 15% experienced it.
- More than 28% had witnessed negative slights, insults or jokes that devalued someone's identity, or negated their thoughts or feelings based on their identity or background.

Those who expressed some of the most challenges by job type were in customer/client/patient services jobs, with 31% reporting verbal abuse. They were followed by manual laborers at 23% and office workers at 22%.

More than 1 in 10 manual laborers had experienced [physical violence](#) at work, compared to about 1 in 20 [office workers](#) and customer/client/patient services workers.

The APA considered the U.S. Surgeon General's [Framework for Mental Health and Well-Being in the Workplace](#) for this year's [survey](#). Within that framework is the tenet "protection from harm," meaning employers have a duty to protect workers from toxic workplaces.

Even with these issues, there is improvement in mental health support in the workplace, the survey found. About 77% of workers were either very or somewhat satisfied with the support for mental health and well-being they received from their employers. About 59% strongly or somewhat agreed that their employer offers information about available mental health resources.

The survey also found that the overwhelming majority (about 92%) of people feel it is very or somewhat important to work for an organization that values their emotional and psychological well-being. The same number said it was important their employer provide support for employee mental [health](#).

"Our [survey data](#) confirms that employees prioritize both physical and psychological support at work, and that the practices employers are putting in place are heading in the right direction," Evans said.

"However, it is clear there are many areas that require improvement. The number of workers experiencing not only a toxic [workplace](#), but also increasing amounts of stress and a lack of respect concerning personal

time, is disturbing."

The Harris Poll conducted the survey on behalf of the APA.

More information: The U.S. Department of Labor has more on [mental health at work](#).

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