

Poll finds younger workers feel stressed, lonely and undervalued

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Younger workers are struggling with feelings of loneliness and a lack of appreciation at work and tend to feel more comfortable working with people their own age, according to a survey by the American

Psychological Association.

The [2024 Work in America survey](#), conducted online by The Harris Poll of more than 2,000 working U.S. adults, found that three in 10 U.S. workers reported that people in their organization who are not close to their age do not see the value in their ideas (32%).

That number was significantly higher for workers aged 18–25 (48%) than for workers aged 65 and older (16%). Workers aged 18–25 and 26–43 were also significantly more likely than workers aged 44–57, 58–64 and 65+ to say that they feel more comfortable working with people their own age than with other age groups (62% and 57% vs. 42%, 38% and 27%).

While most working adults reported that they appreciate the opportunity to work with people of different ages (92%) and say that having colleagues from a range of age groups is an advantage for their workplace (87%), a quarter said that they are worried about job security because of their age. And nearly three in 10 U.S. workers (29%) said that they feel self-conscious about their age at work, including 43% of workers aged 18–25.

There are signs that [younger workers](#) may have difficulty connecting with their coworkers on a personal level as well; nearly half (45%) of workers aged 18–25 said they feel lonely when they are working, significantly more than workers aged 26–43 (33%), 44–57 (22%), 58–64 (15%) and 65+ (14%). They are also more likely than older workers to say they typically feel tense or stressed out during their workday (48% aged 18–25, 51% aged 26–43, and 42% aged 44–57 vs. 30% aged 58–64 and 17% aged 65+).

"With more workers retiring later in life, the demographics of the workplace are changing and younger workers seem to be having the

hardest time adjusting. At the same time, with increased [remote work](#) and the use of new technologies like AI, younger and older workers alike are facing a paradigm shift around where and how we work," said Arthur C. Evans Jr., Ph.D., APA's chief executive officer.

"To remain competitive, employers should invest in strategies that support their workers' well-being and [mental health](#) to help them navigate these new norms and evolving professional landscape."

Overall, a third of U.S. workers said they do not have enough control over when, where and how they do their work. One in three workers (33%) also said they are not working in their preferred location, be it remote, in person or a hybrid of the two.

According to the survey, 59% of U.S. workers reported currently working all in person, 24% reported being hybrid and 17% reported working completely remotely. However, only 38% of workers reported they would prefer to work all in person, compared with 34% who reported preferring to work hybrid and 28% who reported preferring to work remotely.

Other key findings:

- The percentage of workers who reported that their employer offers four-day workweeks was significantly higher in 2024 than the previous two years (14% in 2022, 17% in 2023 and 22% in 2024). And two-thirds (67%) said they believe the four-day workweek will become standard in their lifetime.
- Employees' use of AI is outpacing employer guidance, with more than one-third of workers (35%) who reported using AI monthly or more often to assist with their work. However, only 18% reported knowing that their employer has an official policy about acceptable uses of AI. Half of workers said their employer has

no such policy, and close to one-third (32%) were unsure.

- A majority (67%) of workers reported experiencing at least one outcome often associated with workplace burnout in the last month, such as lack of interest, motivation, or low energy, feeling lonely or isolated and a lack of effort at work.

What also stood out was that workers who feel comfortable expressing themselves or raising difficult issues without fear of negative consequences—what psychologists call "psychological safety"—tend to report better experiences at work.

Workers who experience higher levels of psychological safety are more likely than workers experiencing lower levels of psychological safety to say they feel like they belong (95% vs. 69%) and that they feel comfortable being themselves in the workplace (95% vs. 75%). They were also 10 times less likely to say their workplace is very or somewhat toxic than workers who experience lower levels of psychological safety (3% vs. 30%).

The poll found that people with disabilities reported experiencing a lack of psychological safety at work at an alarming rate, which could be linked to the negative impacts of ableism or unequal access to opportunities due to bias. Two-thirds of workers with a cognitive, emotional, learning or [mental disability](#) and a similar number of workers with a [physical disability](#) (63%) reported experiencing lower levels of psychological safety, compared with 45% of workers who did not report having a disability.

Workers with disabilities were more likely to report concerns about their workplaces. Less than half (48%) of individuals living with a cognitive, emotional, learning or mental disability described their company's culture as one that respects time off, compared with 63% of those not living with a disability. And 57% of workers with physical disabilities

reported concern that AI may make some or all of their job duties obsolete in the near future, compared with 37% of workers who did not report having a disability.

"Our survey findings underscore the need for employers to create psychologically safe work environments for their employees," Evans said. "We know from research that psychological safety not only enhances individual employee well-being but strengthens the organization by fostering a culture of creativity, innovation and effective teamwork, which ultimately helps to improve the bottom line."

Methodology

The research was conducted online in the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the American Psychological Association among 2,027 employed adults.

The survey was conducted March 25–April 3, 2024. Data are weighted where necessary by age by gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, [marital status](#), household size, work status, household income, and smoking status to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

[A full methodology is available.](#)

More information: [www.apa.org/pubs/reports/work- ... n-america-report.pdf](http://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/work-...n-america-report.pdf)

Provided by American Psychological Association

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