MENTAL HEALTH IN IT 2020

A report by BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT

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Version 1.0

Making IT good for society

Established in 1957, BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT, is the leading body for those working in IT. With a worldwide membership now of more than 55,000 members in over 100 countries, BCS is the qualifying body for Chartered IT Professionals (CITP).

BCS was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1984. Its objectives are to promote the study and practice of computing and to advance knowledge of and education in, IT for the benefit of the public. BCS is also a registered charity.

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INTRODUCTION

Mental Health has had an increasing profile in recent years, but with this report we wanted to focus on IT professionals. What is their experience of mental health issues? How does IT as a profession compare with other professions in the incidence of issues?

The insights contained within these reports are drawn firstly from an analysis of secondary data from the ONS Labour Force Survey (see notes for details) and this is augmented by primary input from BCS research. The ONS data establishes the prevalence of mental health conditions amongst IT specialists in the UK and provides a comparison for those with/without such conditions with regards to their levels of social well-being, remuneration and general employment characteristics.

As with all areas of diversity the picture for IT workers in mental health is mixed. In general, although there has been an upward trend in mental health issues for those in IT, it is lower than that for workers as a whole. But the picture is less clear cut when the data is delved into, for example, IT contractors have more difficulties than the employed, as do female workers in the IT area.

The incidence differs by specialism too: mental health conditions are most often apparent for web designers/developers – 5.8% of whom on average stated that over the 2014-18 period they had experienced; 'depression, bad nerves or anxiety', or 'mental illness, or had suffered from phobia, panics or other nervous disorders' for a period of 12 months or more – a figure notably higher than that recorded for IT specialists in general and workers as a whole.

Perhaps counter-intuitively, bearing in mind the encouragement of work-life balance, part-time IT specialists are more than twice as likely to have mental health conditions as those working full-time hours (6.7% versus 3.0% during 2014-18) and this was reflected in the numbers for workers as a whole (6.9% versus 3.7%).

ANALYSIS OF THIRD-PARTY RESEARCH

Key data points

> The incidence of mental health issues amongst IT specialists is lower than that for workers as a whole, though there were approximately 58,000 IT specialists with a mental health condition working in the UK during 2018.

> The incidence of mental health issues amongst IT specialists has followed an upward trend over the past five years.

> IT specialists with mental health issues are typically less happy and less satisfied with life, feel life less worthwhile and feel more anxious than those without such conditions.

> IT specialists with mental health conditions typically earn around 13% less than IT specialists that do not.

> Amongst IT specialists, mental health conditions are most often reported by web designers/developers and IT operations technicians.

> Mental health conditions are more common amongst IT contractors (the self-employed) than those working as employees and the difference is even greater between IT specialists in permanent as opposed to temporary work.

> Women working in IT positions are almost twice as likely to report having mental health conditions as their male counterparts and the incidence of mental health amongst part-time IT specialists is more than double that of full-time IT workers.

> The incidence of mental health conditions amongst IT specialists decreases with higher levels of educational attainment.

> Perhaps surprisingly, the incidence of mental health conditions appears lower amongst IT specialists working in London than in other UK nations/regions.

> IT specialists working in IT businesses are less likely to have mental health conditions than those working in other parts of the economy.

> IT specialists working in the public sector and 'other services' are most likely to report having mental health conditions.

1   THE INCIDENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

1.1 Overview

There were approximately 58,000 IT specialists with a mental health condition[1] working in the UK during 2018 that is 3.6% of all those working in IT occupations at that time. By comparison, mental health conditions were apparent amongst 5.7% of the workforce as a whole.

INCIDENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH BY OCCUPATION, 2014-18
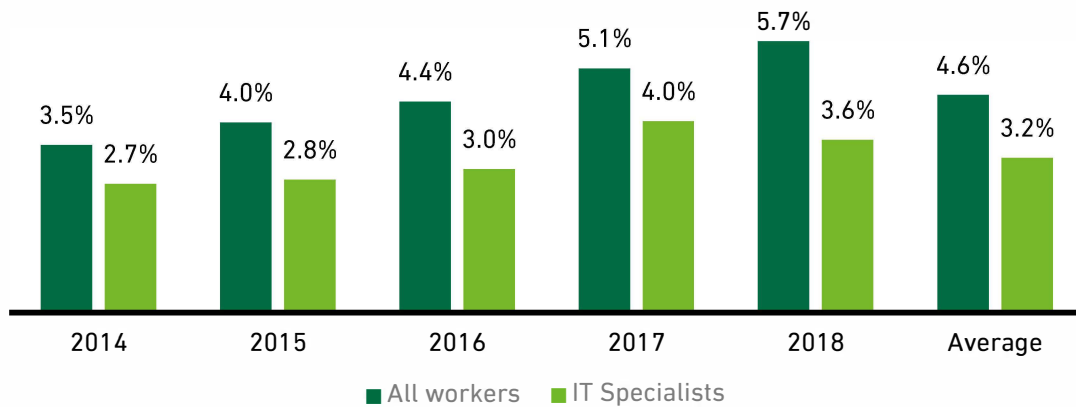
Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey

As illustrated in the chart above, the incidence of mental health conditions has been increasing over the past five years – both with regards IT specialists and workers more generally. The rate of increase amongst those in IT roles has however, been more muted than that associated with the workforce as a whole, with increases of 0.9 versus 2.2 percentage points, respectively.

Given the relatively small number of individuals with mental health conditions and the effect that this can have upon the reliability of related, survey-based estimates, further analysis of mental health amongst IT specialists has been carried out using data spanning the 2014-18 period (i.e. a five year average)and as such it is also worth noting from the above chart that over the 2014-18 period again, the incidence of mental health conditions for IT practitioners is notably lower than that for the UK workforce as a whole.

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[1] As defined by ONS within the Quarterly Labour Force Survey questionnaire i.e. workers with health conditions/illnesses lasting 12 months and in particular, those with; 'depression, bad nerves or anxiety', or 'mental illness, or suffer from phobia, panics or other nervous disorders'.

1.2 Mental health by IT occupation

Amongst those working as IT specialists it would appear that mental health conditions are most often apparent for web designers/developers – 5.8% of whom on average stated that over the 2014-18 period they had experienced; 'depression, bad nerves or anxiety', or 'mental illness, or had suffered from phobia, panics or other nervous disorders' for a period of 12 months or more – a figure notably higher than that recorded for IT specialists in general and workers as a whole .

FIGURE 2: INCIDENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH BY IT OCCUPATION, 2014-18
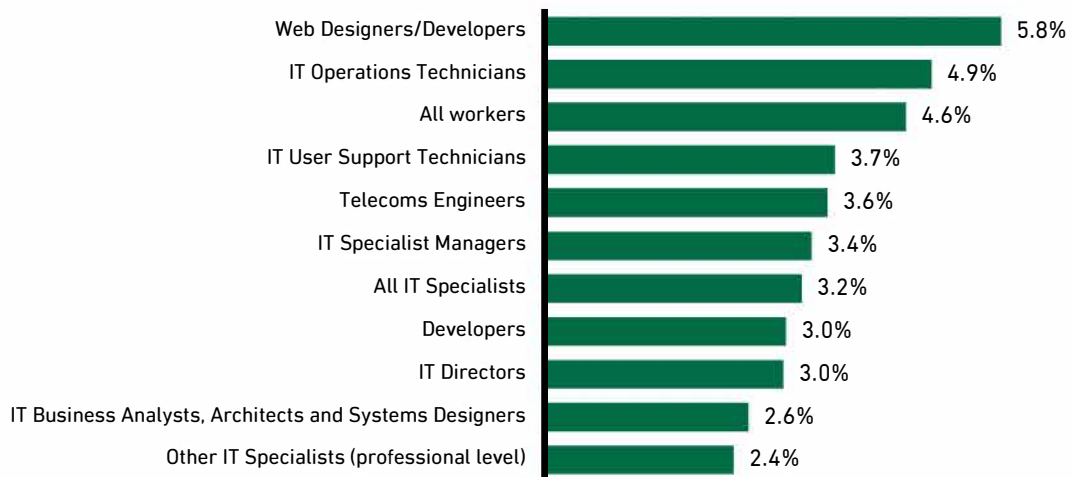
Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey

Aside from web designers/developers, IT operations technicians were also noted as being much more likely to have had mental health conditions than most other (IT)workers (i.e. 4.9% stating this to be the case over the 2014-18 period), whilst by contrast, the incidence of such conditions amongst 'Other' IT specialists (professional level) in particular was much lower at just 2.4%.

1.3 The incidence of mental health compared

As illustrated within the chart below, the incidence of mental health conditions amongst IT specialists appears relatively low compared to many other 'recognised professions' – notably Librarians who were around two and a half times more likely to report having mental conditions over the 2014-18 period (8.5% in this case).

FIGURE 3: INCIDENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH BY SELECTED 'PROFESSIONS', 2014-18

Profession	Percentage
Librarians	8.5%
Nurses	4.7%
All workers	4.6%
Secondary School teachers	3.9%
Solicitors	3.3%
IT Specialists	3.2%
Doctors	2.4%
Accountants	2.2%
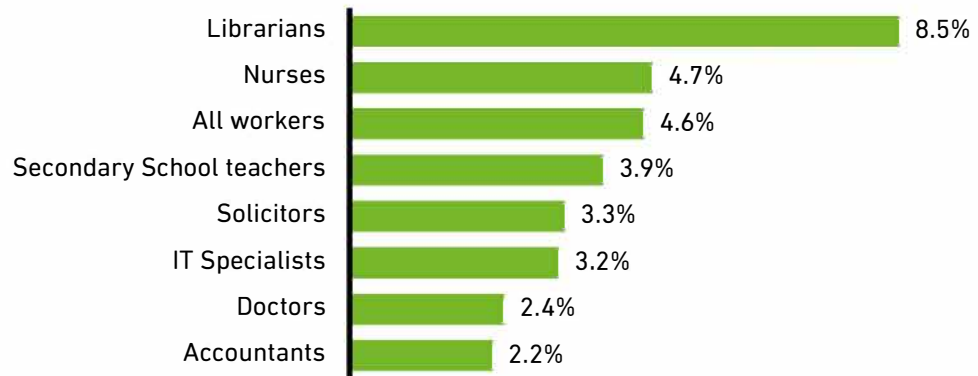
Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey

A comparison with other 'career paths' or 'wider occupational groups'[2] again shows IT specialists as being relatively less likely to have mental health conditions and, whilst in this case those working in welfare/social work occupations most commonly stated that they had experienced; 'depression, bad nerves or anxiety', or 'mental illness, or had suffered from phobia, panics or other nervous disorders' for a period of 12 months or more during the 2014-18 period.
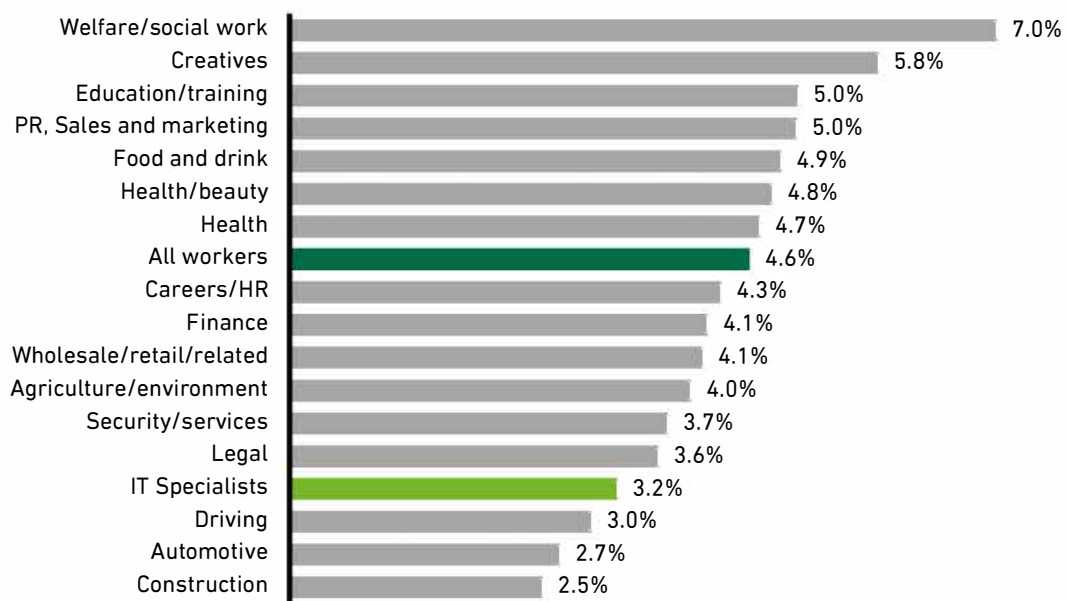
FIGURE 4: INCIDENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH BY SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL GROUP, 2014-18
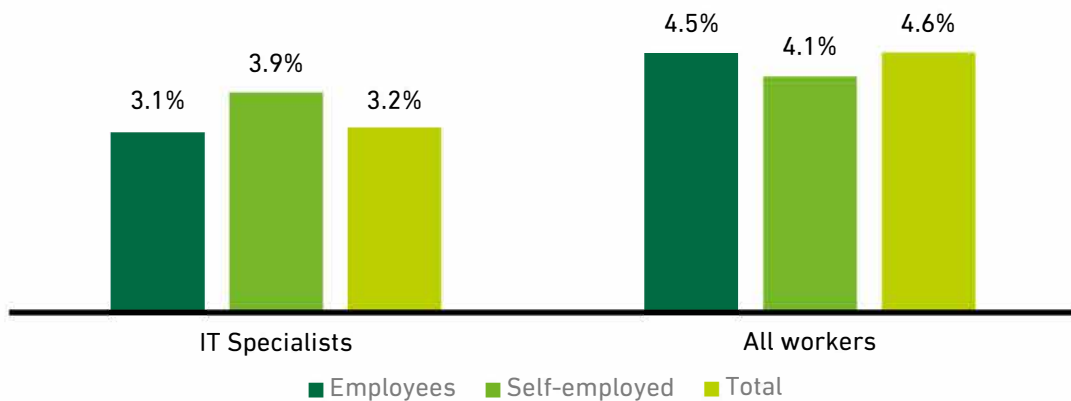

Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey

[2] Groups presented here are 'non-standard' combinations of Standard Occupational Classification (SOC2010) codes drawn up by BCS for comparison purposes in this report. Details are available on request.

1.4 Mental health and contractual arrangements

Mental health conditions appear more common amongst IT contractors (i.e. the self-employed) than those working as employees (3.9% and 3.1% in each cover the 2014-18 period) which is contrary to situation within the workforce as a whole (comparison figures of 4.1% and 4.5% respectively).

FIGURE 5: INCIDENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH BY CONTRACTUAL STATUS, 2014-18
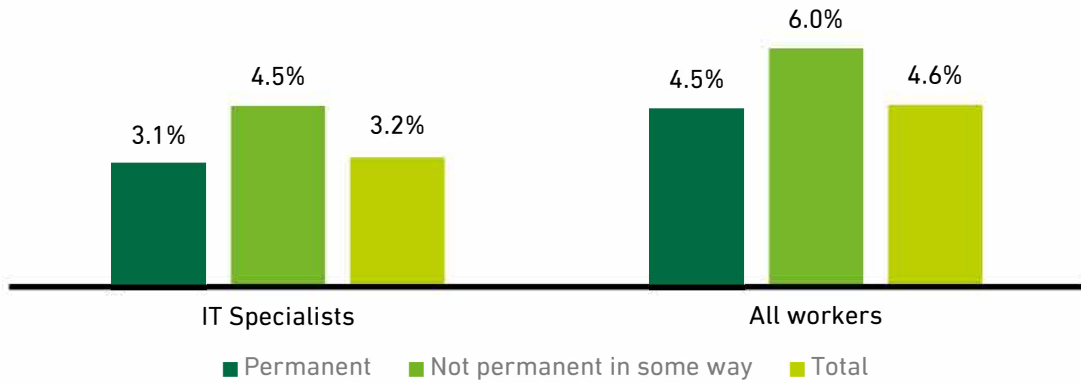

Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey

That said, the incidence of mental health conditions appears to be even higher amongst individuals working under other contractual arrangements (i.e. government schemes and unpaid work for family), or at least within the wider workforce[3] and for those working under such an arrangement, the likelihood of having a mental health condition is almost four times higher than for workers in general (i.e. 17.3% versus 4.6% over the 2014-18 period)

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[3] Comparison figures for IT Specialists unavailable due to limitations of the data.

FIGURE 6: INCIDENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH BY PERMANENCY OF EMPLOYMENT, 2014-18
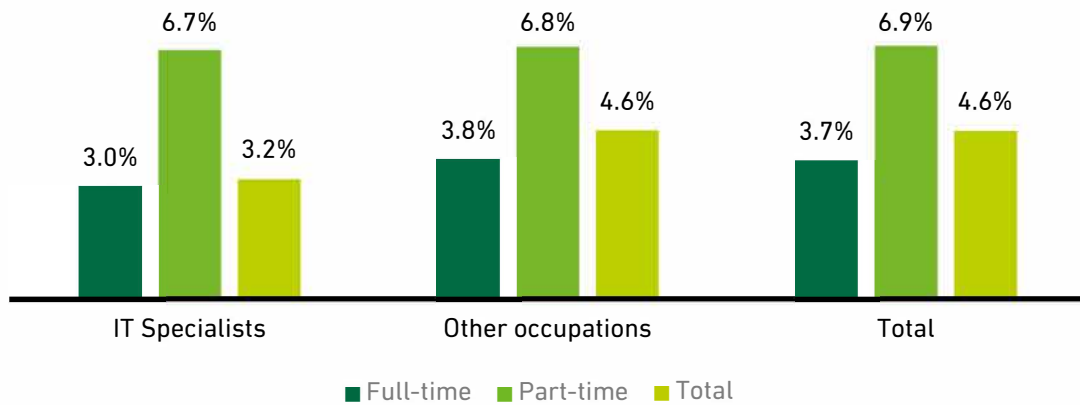

Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey

The incidence of mental health conditions also varies with permanency of employment and, like other workers, IT specialists working on non-permanent contracts are more likely to have mental health conditions than those in 'secure' work (4.5% compared versus 3.1% respectively during the 2014-18 period as illustrated overleaf).

1.5 Mental health and hours of work

Part-time IT specialists are more than twice as likely to have mental health conditions as those working full-time hours (6.7% versus 3.0% during 2014-18) and this was much the same as the situation reported by workers a as whole (6.9% versus 3.7%).

FIGURE 7: INCIDENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH AMONGST FULL AND PART-TIME IT SPECIALISTS 2014-18

Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey

1.6 Mental health and skill levels

There is a negative correlation between skill level and the incidence of mental health conditions amongst IT specialists – using educational attainment as a proxy for skill level it can be seen that the incidence rises from 2.7% amongst IT specialists with degrees/equivalent to 4.2% of those whose highest qualification is at GCSE level and over 5% amongst those with 'other' qualifications.

By comparison however, there appears to be little correlation between the incidence of mental health and educational attainment amongst the UK workforce as a whole over this period.

FIGURE 8: MENTAL HEALTH AMONGST IT SPECIALISTS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2014-18
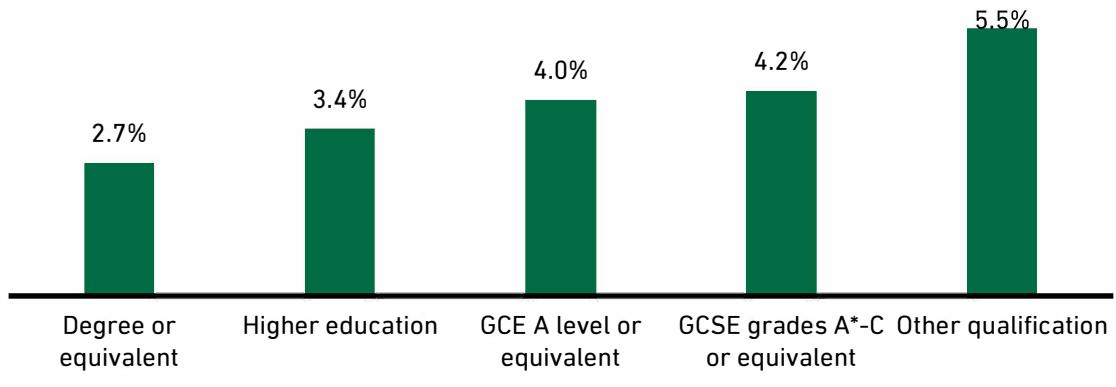
Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey

1.7 Mental health across the UK

The incidence of mental health conditions amongst IT specialists ranges from 2.7% of the London IT workforce to almost twice this level amongst those working in Wales (5.3% during the 2014-18 period). Moreover, aside from London, only in the East and the South East of England is the incidence of mental health conditions amongst IT specialists seen to be lower than the UK average.

FIGURE 9: INCIDENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH BY REGION OF WORK, 2014-18
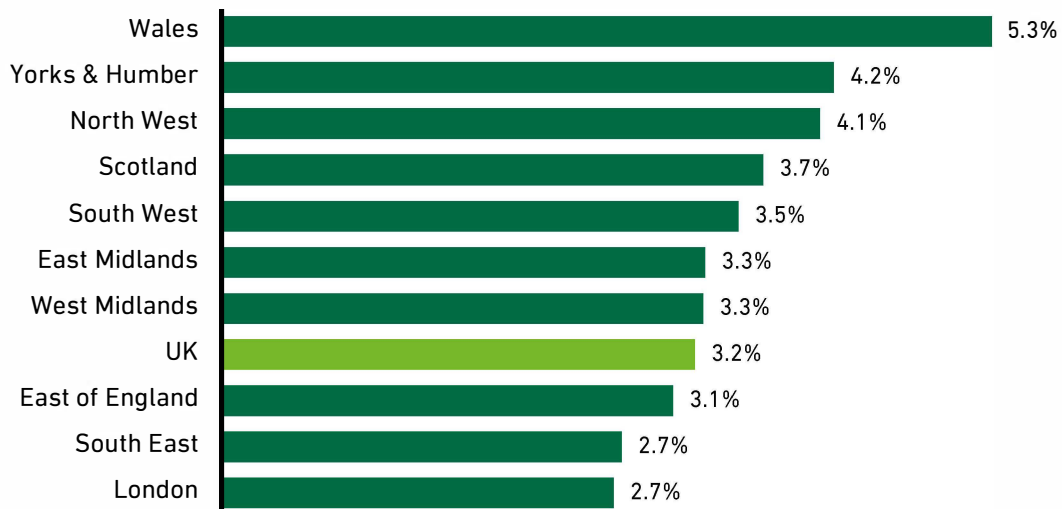
Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey

2   MENTAL HEALTH AND EMPLOYER CHARACTERISTICS

2.1 Mental health by size of workplace

For IT specialists and other employees, the incidence of mental health conditions appears slightly higher at workplaces with less than 250 staff (SME equivalent) and lower at larger sites.
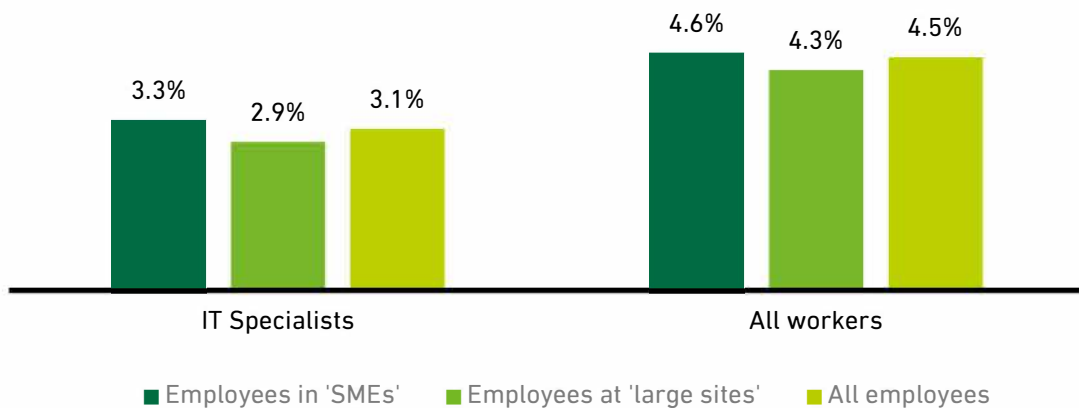
FIGURE 10: INCIDENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS BY SIZE OF WORKPLACE, 2014-18

Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey

2.2 Mental health by industry

Interestingly, IT specialists working in the IT industries are notably less likely to report mental health conditions than those working in other parts of the economy (2.7% versus 3.7% respectively) and this observation also holds true for other workers employed (as employees or otherwise) in IT businesses.

Looking in more detail at other parts of the economy, it appears that the outside of the IT sector itself, the incidence of mental health conditions amongst IT specialists is similar for most industry 'sections'[4] bar the public sector and 'other services' in particular where IT specialists are almost twice as likely to report having mental health conditions (i.e. 6.5% stating this to be the case over the 2014-18 period).

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[4] Broad industry groups defined by the ONS Standard Industrial Classification (2007).

FIGURE 11: INCIDENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN THE IT AND OTHER SECTORS, 2014-18

All industries — IT Specialists 3.2%, All workers 4.6%
IT industry — IT Specialists 2.7%, All workers 3.5%
Other industries — IT Specialists 3.7%, All workers 4.5%

Banking and finance — IT Specialists 3.3%, All workers 4.3%
Transport and communication — IT Specialists 3.6%, All workers 3.7%
Distribution, hotels and restaurants — IT Specialists 3.7%, All workers 5.1%
Manufacturing — IT Specialists 3.7%, All workers 3.3%
Public admin, education and health — IT Specialists 4.4%, All workers 5.4%
Other services — IT Specialists 6.5%, All workers 5.4%
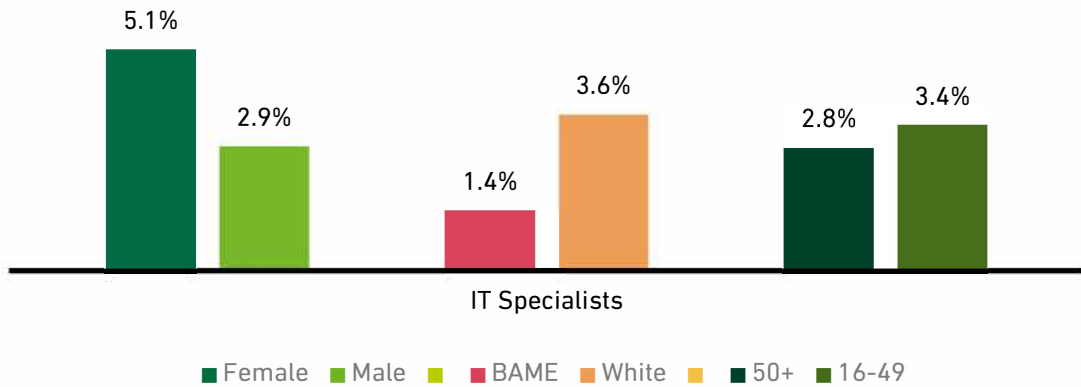
■ IT Specialists   ■ All workers

Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey

3 MENTAL HEALTH, DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY IN IT

3.1 Mental health and diversity

A comparison of the incidence of mental health conditions by gender, ethnicity and age reveals that women working in IT occupations are more likely than their male counterparts to report such conditions (5.1% on average over the 2014-18 period compared with 2.9% of males), whilst other 'minority' groups tended to be less likely have mental health conditions than IT workers as a whole – these findings mirroring those for the workforce more generally.

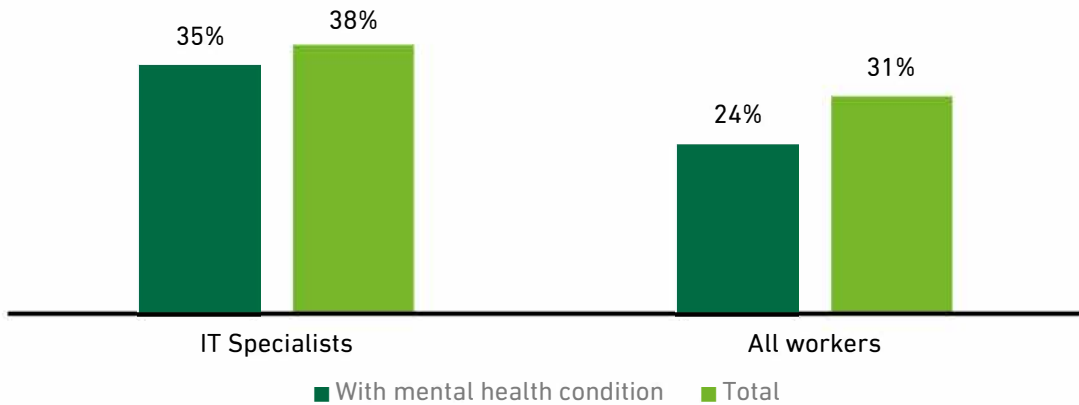FIGURE 12: DIVERSITY AND INCIDENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN IT, 2014-18

Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey

As perhaps would be expected, the incidence of mental health conditions amongst IT specialists (and other workers) classed as disabled according to 2010 Equality Act appears to be much more common than for those not classed as such i.e. 25% in the case of IT specialists and 26% for UK workers as a whole over the 2014-18 period.

3.2 Mental health and 'responsibility'

IT specialists with mental conditions are less likely to be given supervisory responsibility (i.e. to be managers, foremen or supervisors) than those without such conditions (35% versus 38%) – as is the case for individuals in other occupations. The difference however, is less pronounced amongst those working in IT roles as illustrated in the chart overleaf.

FIGURE 13: FOREMEN/SUPERVISORS BY OCCUPATION, 2014-18

Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey

3.3 Mental health and pay

IT specialists with mental health conditions earn less than the norm and this is also the case for workers in other occupations - whilst full-time IT specialists working in permanent positions across the UK were earning £19.40 per hour on average over the 2014-18 period (median figure), those with mental health conditions were receiving just £17.0 per hour i.e. 13% less.

FIGURE 14: INCIDENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH BY REMUNERATION, 2014-18
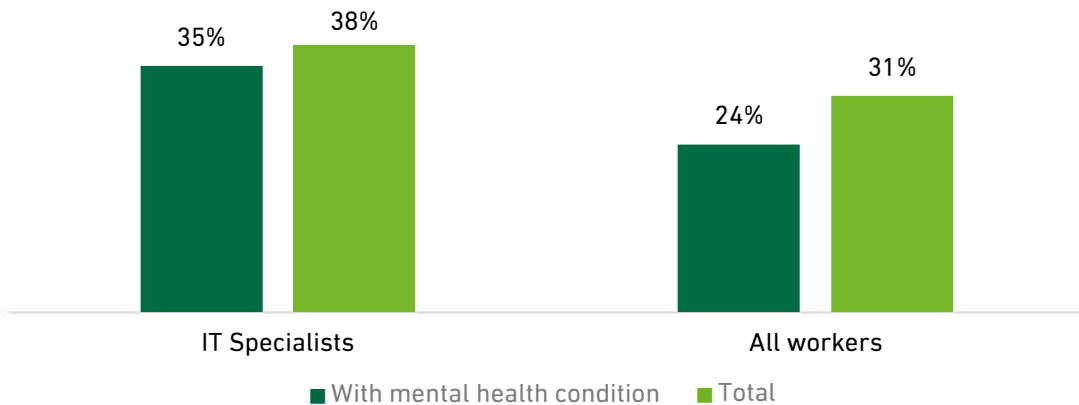
Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey

3.4 Mental health and personal well-being

Like other workers with mental health conditions, those in IT positions appear to be less happy, less satisfied with their life, less likely to feel that things in life are worthwhile and be more anxious than others working in such roles but without mental health conditions.

Most notable is the difference in the levels of anxiety reported by those with mental health conditions which, over the 2014-18 period are seen to be around 76% higher than those without such conditions [5].

FIGURE 15: INCIDENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH BY KEY WELL-BEING MEASURES, 2014-18
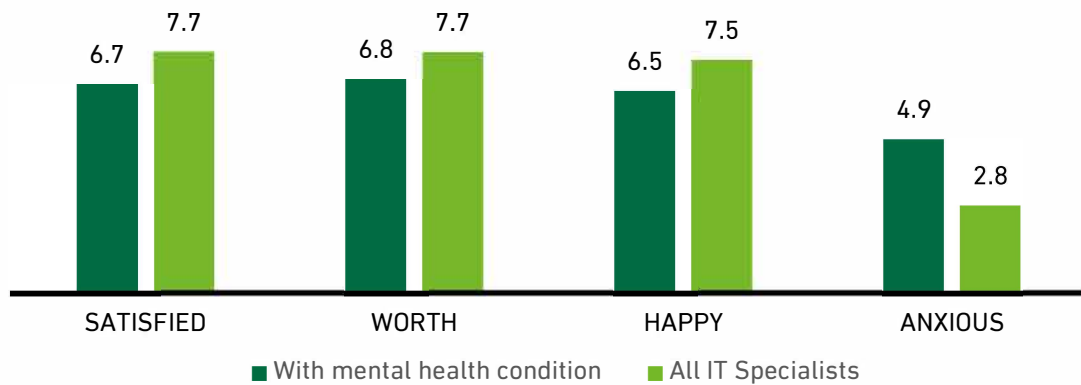
Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Annual Population Survey

In particular, this difference in the level of personal well-being tends to be most pronounced amongst IT specialists working as IT engineers, specialist IT managers, IT user support technicians and web designers/developers.

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[5] Each quarter, respondents to the LFS are asked a series of questions about their perceived level of well-being i.e. 'Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?', 'Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?, 'How happy did you feel yesterday?' and, 'How anxious did you feel yesterday?'. In each case a rated response is given using a scale from 0-10 where nought is 'not at all ....' and 10 is 'completely ....'. This chart gives an average response rating for each of the four measures over the 2014-2018 period.

4 BCS RESEARCH

BCS wanted to ascertain IT professionals' experience of mental health issues in their day to day work, what they consider to be unique stresses, what they considered the effects on their careers to be and how organisations approach amelioration. In addition to quantifying questions we also encouraged participants to complete a number of free text sections, where we could get a sense of concerns in a more informal way.

Key findings:

> 56% of respondents indicated that their workplace has a mental health policy.
> About two-thirds of participants feel that their job is stressful.
> The top two factors cited as making a job stressful are heavy workload and tight deadlines.
> Nearly half the respondents (48%) feel there are unique pressures in the IT industry that affect the mental health of employees.
> 46% of respondents admitted that they have been absent from work because of stress, anxiety or depression, but not disclosed the real reason, attributing their absence to another illness.
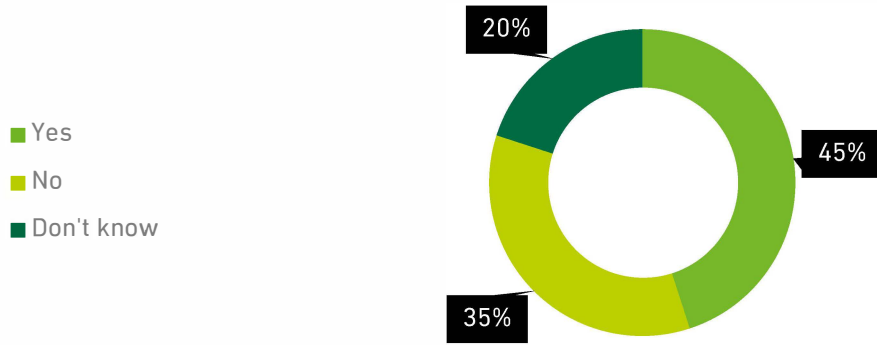
4.1 Mental health policies

DOES YOUR WORKPLACE HAVE A MENTAL HEALTH POLICY?
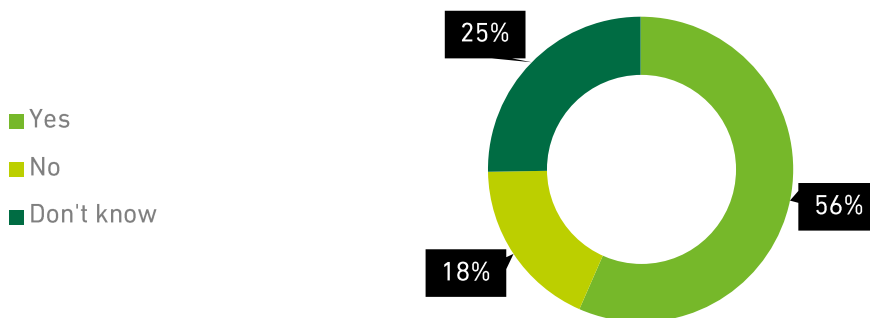
Source: BCS

DOES YOUR WORKPLACE HAVE DEDICATED MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDERS?

Legend:
- Yes
- No
- Don't know

20%

45%

35%

Source: BCS

HAVE YOU SPOKEN TO A MENTAL HEATLH FIRST AIDER AT YOUR WORKPLACE ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH?

Legend:
- Yes
- No

18%

82%
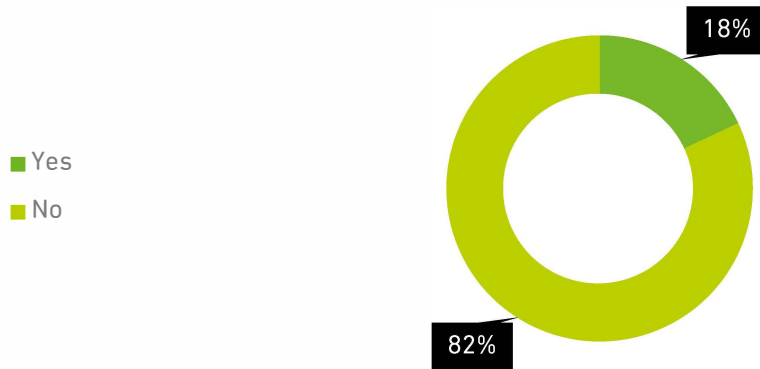
Source: BCS

4.2 Personal experience

Perceptions of stress are fairly high, with 66% of people rating it seven out of 10 or higher (10 denoting the highest stress level). When this was drilled into the two most significant causes were 'heavy workload' and 'tight deadlines' – and workload was the most likely choice to appear in the participants' top five. However, the good news was what rated low – 'conflict with coworkers' and 'boring work' scored low on the stress assessment, indeed 'boring work' was least likely to appear in participants' top 5 stress factors.

In the free text section a number of other factors came up regularly, some of which are within the gift of an organisation to control: lack of flexible working policies, overly bureaucratic procedures, 'horrendous commutes', shifting objectives (also mentioned in this context – constant changing of priorities and decisions) and high coworker turnover.

ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10, HOW STRESSFUL WOULD YOU SAY YOUR JOB IS?
1 = NOT AT ALL STRESSFUL, 10=EXTREMELY STRESSFUL.
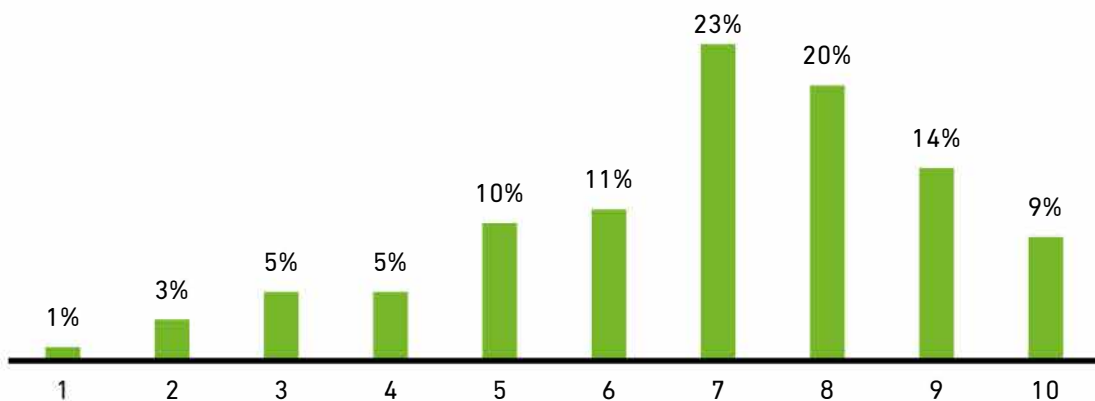
Source: BCS

WHEN THINKING ABOUT THE LEVEL OF STRESS YOU CURRENTLY FEEL AT WORK, HOW DOES THIS COMPARE WITH THE LEVEL YOU WERE EXPERIENCING 12 MONTHS AGO?

- Increased significantly
- Increased somewhat
- Remained the same
- Decreased somewhat
- Decreased significantly

8% 20% 23% 30% 18%
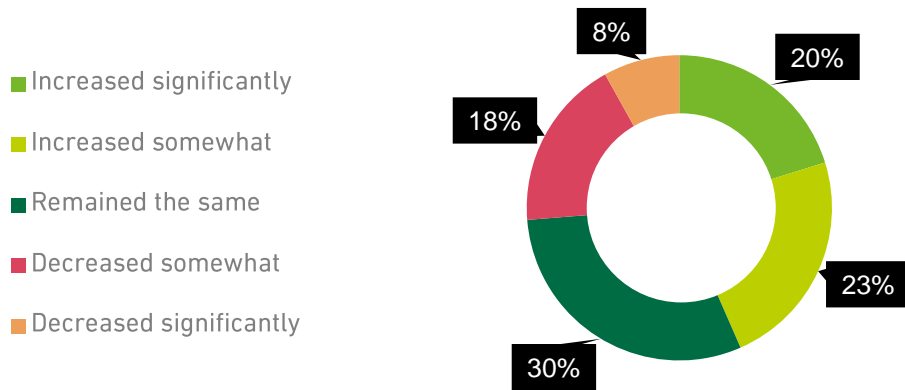
Source: BCS

In the past twelve months, 43% consider their stress level to have increased and in that timeframe 21% have been absent from work on the grounds of stress, anxiety, or depression. In a five-year timeframe that number stands at 50%.

Of those who have been absent for stress, anxiety, or depression, 46% report that they attributed the reason for their employers to another illness.

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ABSENT FROM WORK ON THE GROUNDS OF STRESS, ANXIETY, OR DEPRESSION? (PLEASE TICK ONE ONLY)

- Yes, less than 12 months ago
- Yes, 1–2 years ago
- Yes, 3–5 years ago
- Yes, over 5 years ago
- No, never

21% 11% 7% 12% 50%
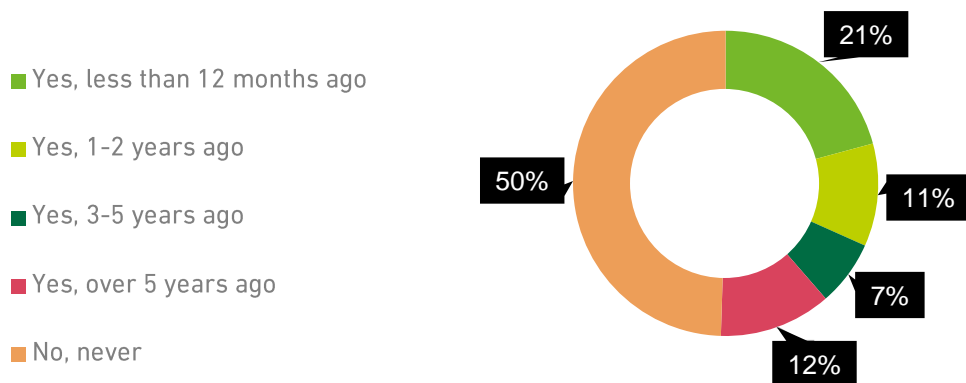
Source: BCS

4.3 Disclosure and career effects

How did those involved in this survey feel their career has been affected? From the 25% of those who would reveal a mental health condition prior to be offered a job, 59% felt that this would have a negative or very negative effect on their career. Clearly confidence in corporate understanding of mental health issues is low.

WOULD YOU DISCLOSE YOUR DIAGNOSED MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION TO YOUR MANAGER / ORGANISATION PRIOR TO BEING OFFERED A JOB?

- Yes
- No

25%

75%
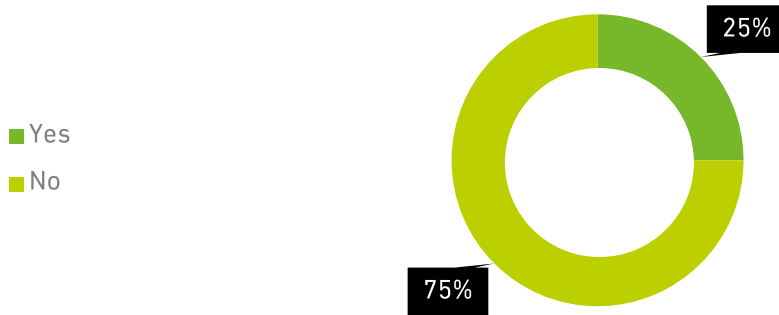
Source: BCS. Base: all who have a diagnosed mental health condition (n=67)

IN WHAT WAY DO YOU FEEL DISCLOSING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION WOULD AFFECT YOUR CAREER?

- Very negative effect
- Negative effect
- No effect
- Positive effect
- Very positive effect

6%   0%   6%

35%

53%
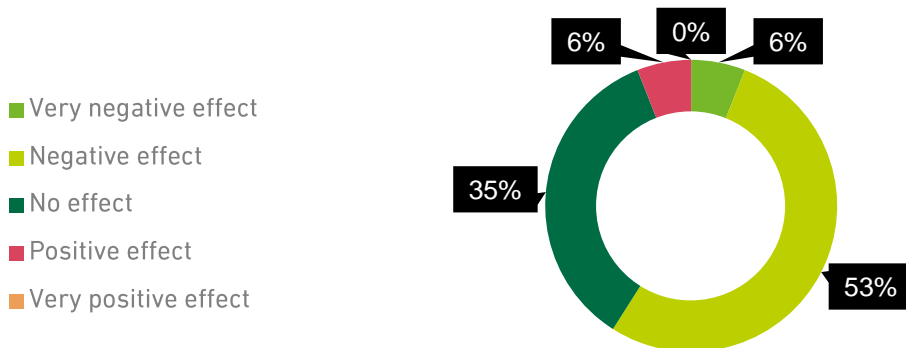
Source: BCS. Base: all who would disclose their mental health condition to their manager / organisation prior to being offered a job (n=17)

Of the 75% who would not disclose a mental health condition prior to be offered a job, 94% felt it would have held their career back to do so.

DO YOU FEEL THAT DISCLOSING YOUR CONDITION WOULD HAVE HELD YOU BACK IN YOUR CAREER?

6%

- Yes
- No

94%
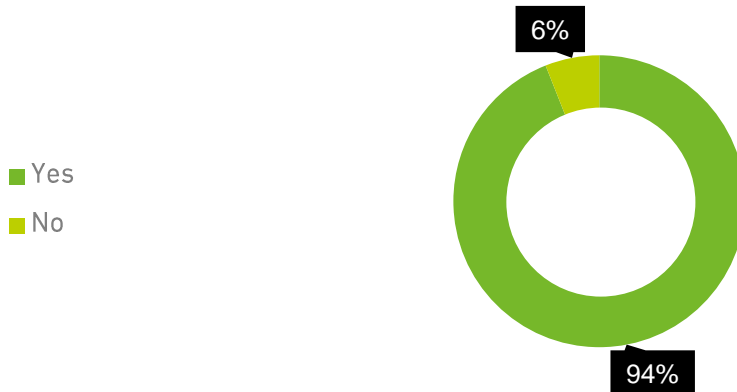
Base: all who would NOT disclose their diagnosed mental health condition to their manager prior to being offered a job (n=50)

When actually in-post, there is a large contingent who feel their work is affected by their mental health. Of those who have a diagnosed condition, 73% feel their ability to carry out their work has been either negatively or very negatively affected.

HOW HAS YOUR MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION AFFECTED YOUR ABILITY TO CARRY OUT YOUR WORK?

6%   0%   18%

21%

- Very negative effect
- Negative effect
- No effect
- Positive effect
- Very positive effect

55%
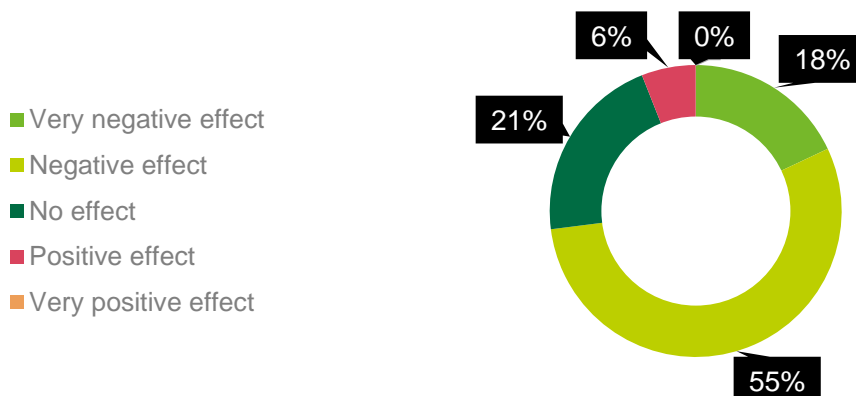
Source: BCS. Base: all who have a diagnosed mental health condition (n=67)

4.4 Amelioration

It seems that when in-post the feelings of people toward revealing mental health issues improves somewhat. We asked whether participants had discussed their mental health with their managers in the last two years. On the positive side, 30% had and a further 34% would be willing to do so, although not having done so to date. The negative was the 36% who feel unable to do so.

HAVE YOU DISCUSSED ANY MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS WITH YOUR MANAGER IN THE PAST TWO YEARS?

- Yes
- No, but I would feel able to do so
- No, and I don't feel able to do so

30%

36%

34%
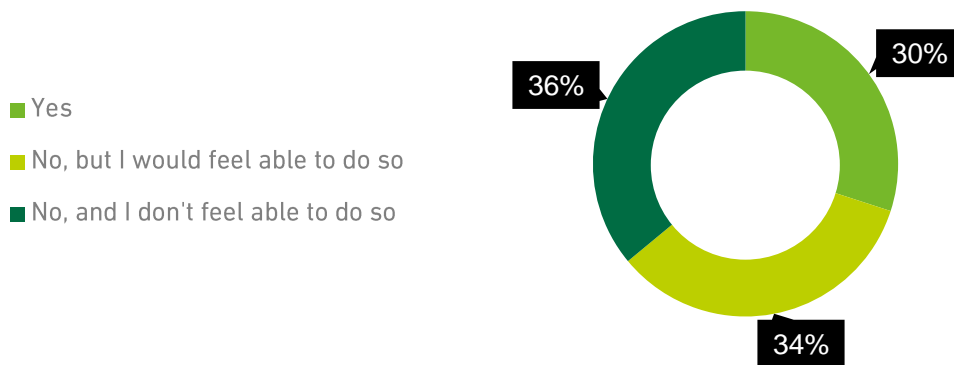
Source: BCS

It is unrealistic to expect all people who suffer with these kind of issues to be willing or able to discuss them in a corporate environment but, for those who are, we wanted to find out what kind of help had been extended and what they think might reasonably be added to the coping toolkit. There seems to be a reasonably good level of understanding toward time off for appointments and treatment and flexible working arrangements (although 41% didn't have this offered at all). Other coping mechanisms were very patchy indeed, as you can see overleaf.

AS A RESULT OF DISCUSSING MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS WITH YOUR MANAGER, WERE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING OFFERED AND / OR TAKEN UP?

	Yes, offered and taken up	Yes, offered but not taken up	Not offered
Changes to your working area	21%	8%	70%
Changes to your working hours	29%	7%	64%
Flexible working arrangements	48%	11%	41%
Being allowed time off for appointments, treatment, etc.	66%	7%	27%
Temporarily re-allocating tasks you find stressful or difficult	20%	18%	63%
Regular 1:1 with HR / professional mentor	16%	5%	79%
Additional support not mentioned above	29%	9%	63%

■ Yes, offered and taken up   ■ Yes, offered but not taken up   ■ Not offered

Base: all who have discussed any mental health concerns with their manager in past two years (n=56)

The verbatims in this section raised other interesting ideas – and also told a story on why there is no one-size-fits-all solution for techniques or even company culture. For example, one commenter said that a one-to-one with HR 'sounds like a nightmare'. Another commented on generalist advice – 'there was a blanket offer of "what can we do to help" although most of the above (our list) were not offered at all.'

Some made practical suggestions – flexibility with deadlines, specific policies to help remediate stress and an employee support service such as having assigned mental health first aiders. On the purely human level, commenters suggested 'general sympathy and consideration in one-to-one meetings' and things as simple as time to discuss these issues with peers, with consideration made to communication channels between colleagues.

Specific help participants actually benefited from were lighter on the ground. One positive one: 'the company paid for 20 sessions with a clinical psychologist' was mentioned. Some respondents were offered an occupational health appointment and counselling through employee healthcare schemes.

At the management level, 40% of respondents had line manager duties, but only just over a quarter of those had received any mental health training.
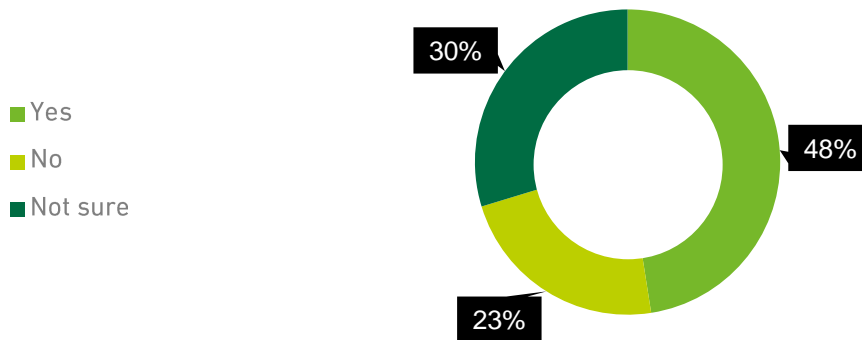
IF YOU ARE A LINE MANAGER, HAVE YOU HAD ANY MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING TO HELP YOU LOOK AFTER YOUR STAFF?

- Yes
- No
- Not a line manager

11%

29%

60%
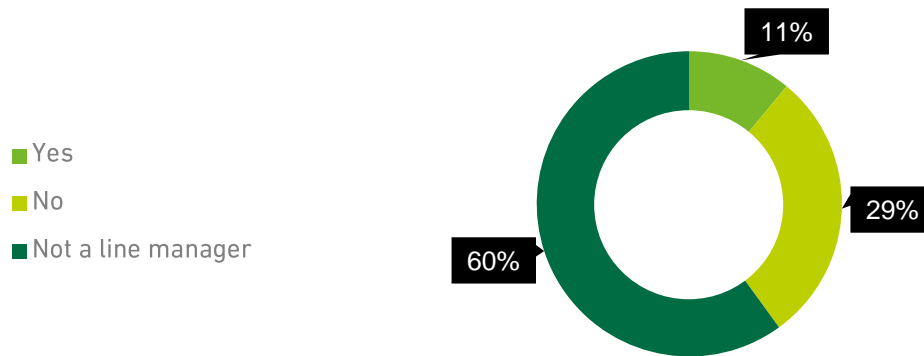
Source: BCS

4.5 Unique pressures of IT

DO YOU FEEL THERE ARE ANY UNIQUE PRESSURES IN THE IT INDUSTRY THAT AFFECT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF EMPLOYEES?

■ Yes
■ No
■ Not sure

Source: BCS

Only 23% of respondents felt that the IT industry did not have unique mental health pressures. We had substantial verbatim feedback on this. Whilst some of the things listed could equally apply to other professions, the comments nonetheless made for sobering reading. Here is a selection of comments, under main headings:

4.5.1 Pace of change

> 'Changes with IT methodologies/working practices.'

> 'Conflict between meeting evolving needs of the business and maintaining existing is more extreme in IMT that other services. Speed of change in the technologies and skills we need to know and provide.'

> 'As we work within an industry constant communication is always possible via skype, slack, emails and even on personal phones. I feel sometimes can actually impede employees from actually switching off from work and can cause serious burnout depending on the company you work for. Perfect example is the company i currently work for is a global company and employees regularly voice their concerns about burnout, with a combination of aggressive targets and passive aggressive managers who constantly badger their employees for results, it's a fast past to employees feeling overwhelmed and stressed and in turn effecting performance.'

> 'The pace of change in technologies and the breadth of technologies used means we rarely get to be an expert in anything and if we do it doesn't last. This leads to an exhilarating but worrying need to run as fast as we can. We can't afford to stand still!'

4.5.2 Contradictory pressures

> 'The insular nature of the work combined with delivering alongside others which seems contradictory but is really how most people have to work in the software industry.'

> 'Customer expectation vs organisational resources doesn't always match, especially when users come from university or dynamic businesses to more restrictive highly regulated environments, leads to stress and friction.'

> 'Non-technical managers and clients can be over-demanding but won't listen to technical advice.'

> 'I think impostor syndrome is common and often caused by a culture of bullying and expectations to remain current in an ever-changing industry.'

> 'Clash between the need for creative thought (needs time and a clear head) and the need for delivery (tight, fixed deadlines).'

> 'A lot of those working in the IT industry do so because they have an interest in IT NOT people. Therefore, the majority of those in the IT Industry have no people skills compared to other industries, but these people have to manage others and they do so poorly.'

4.5.3 Board-level understanding and IT culture

> 'Directors not understanding that some issues cannot be resolved as quickly as they would like.'

> 'Translating very complicated system / enterprise process in lay terms to managers who are not technically trained to understand these issues.'

> 'Flavour of the month methodologies lead to frequently changing and often conflicting timelines and drivers. The flux in IT generally can be very challenging.'

> 'A desire/requirement for workers to work outside work hours to complete projects that were mis-sold to clients on shorter deadlines than are actually feasible in order to make sales. This is almost universal across the sector so is difficult to escape.'

> 'The increasing (mis)use of agile approaches with an emphasis on unrelenting cycles of delivery and constant increases in delivery expectation; the increasing use of social media as a means of finding jobs and contacts. I find social media extremely

stressful and upsetting, yet have to engage in it if I want to find contacts and a role. The pressure to keep on adding to one's profile, the rudeness of the discourse. This is true for twitter for example and also for slack channels - the constant stream of messages most of them irrelevant is overwhelming, noisy and unhelpful.'

> 'As a cybersecurity professional the challenge of maintaining security but work only being visible when things go wrong adds to the stress.'

> 'Working at a computer all day brings physical stresses which can exacerbate mental ones. When working alone for much of the time, you can feel more isolated and others are less likely to notice that there is a problem if you don't mention it yourself.'

> 'Use of contractors on short term contracts means that for managers it can be difficult to spot where mental health problems are arising. Also, the very nature of short-term contracts will lead to increased levels of stress. This can affect both temporary staff on short term contracts and permanent staff who move frequently between projects within the same organisation.'

> 'IT staff especially programmers are trained or forced to think about the future consequence in the source code. Therefore, there is constant worry about making code bullet proof and unnecessary complications. Relief from this or increase in time and deadline will help reduce worry.'

4.5.4 24/7 culture

> 'The modern culture of needing everything instantly puts IT workers under the same sort of stress which retail workers have had for hundreds of years. Only now IT can involve more than one customer shouting at you. All customers are shouting because something is broken.'

> 'Many non-IT colleagues vent their frustration and anger towards IT staff, often blaming or directing blame contributing to increased pressures. As IT is online 24/7, staff also have an expectation for IT staff to work 24/7 365 to ensure access etc.'

> '24/7 "on" culture; culture where excessive drinking is tolerated and often encouraged; tech bro culture.'

DATA NOTES, PART 1 TO 3

1. This report contains statistical data from ONS which is Crown Copyright. The use of the ONS statistical data in this work does not imply the endorsement of the ONS in relation to the interpretation or analysis of the statistical data and research datasets employed may not exactly reproduce National Statistics aggregates.

2. Annual figures presented are derived from the ONS Labour Force Survey (LFS) and have been produced by averaging results for the four quarters of any given year/years. Further details of the LFS can be obtained direct from the ONS website: https://www.ons.gov.uk/surveys/informationforhouseholdsandindividuals/householdandindividualsurveys/labourforcesurveylfs

3. Five-year estimates have often been presented within this report – this is overcome issues of small sample sizes which otherwise render estimates unreliable and/or potentially disclosive.

4. For this report a generic age filter has been applied (16-64 inclusive) for all analysis presented unless specifically stated otherwise.

5. Numerical estimates are rounded to the nearest 1,000, percentages (normally) to one decimal place and rates of pay to the nearest £1 (hourly), as such totals given may not equal the sum of related subsidiary figures.

6. Observations based upon annual workforce estimates of below 6,000- and five-year estimates of below 2,000 have been suppressed.

7. IT specialists are defined by Standard Occupational Classification (SOC2010) codes 1136, 2133-9. 3131/2 and 5242/5

8. The 'IT industries' are defined by a series of Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes which are available on request.

9. Individuals with mental health conditions are defined by ONS methodology set out within the ad-hoc data request: 008200 – Counts and percentages of adults with a mental illness by occupation age sex and ethnicity between May and July 2012 to 2017 i.e. those with health conditions/illnesses lasting 12 month and in particular, those with; 'depression, bad nerves or anxiety', or 'mental illness, or suffer from phobia, panics or other nervous disorders'.

DATA NOTES, PART 4

This report was generated on 03/12/19. Overall 185 respondents completed this questionnaire during the period 18 October to 2 December 2019. The online survey was promoted via several issues of the weekly newsletter as well as some targeted social media campaigns. The target audience was those working within the IT industry in the UK, including people working in IT departments in all sectors.