



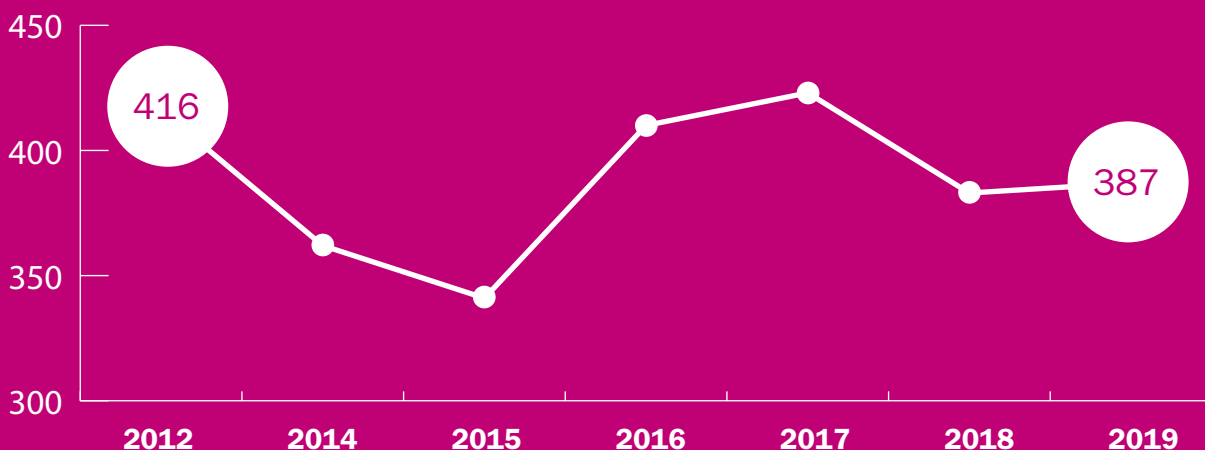
# Mental health practices in Irish businesses 2012 - 2019

A research update

# Organisational experience of mental health

A positive, proactive approach to the promotion of mental wellbeing can lead to benefits for individuals and organisations, including improvements in productivity, employee engagement and reduced levels of absenteeism, among others.

The Ibec research unit has been collecting data on mental health experience from Irish businesses from 2012 to 2019. This work explores the experience of organisations regarding mental ill health as well the existence and usage of a range of mental health and training initiatives within organisations. The number of participants in each year of the survey varied but was always significantly above 300 organisations.

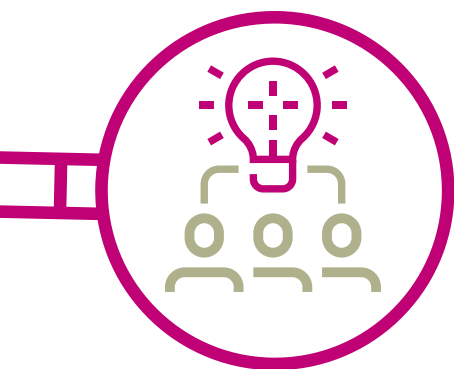
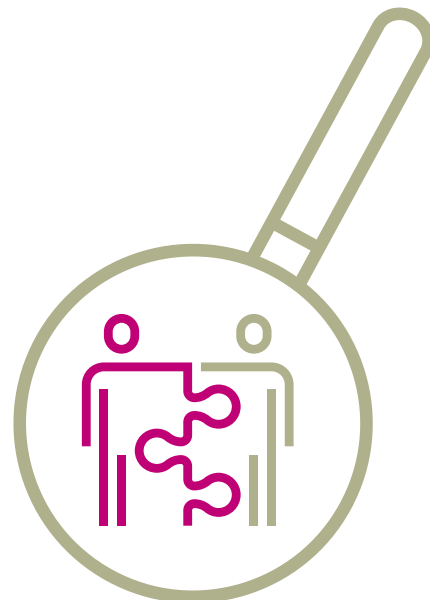


*“We all have mental health that, like physical health, can fluctuate over time. Great employers are embedding good practices, leading to real conversations taking place among employees around mental health and well-being.”*

Dr Kara McGann, Ibec

# Key findings of the research

- The percentage of organisations experiencing mental health disclosures has increased between 2014 and 2019, from 43% to 51%.
- The proportion of organisations with mental wellbeing campaigns in place increased in each consecutive year, almost tripling over the period under review. Some 13% of companies had a mental wellbeing campaign in place in 2012 compared with 38% in 2019.



- Over the period of the study, provision of training to line managers on dealing with mental health issues increased from 8% to 18%. Similar training to HR staff increased from 11% to 21% and training for other employees from 6% to 14%.
- The proportion of respondents offering training in stress management/resilience increased between 2012 and 2019, almost doubling from 13% to 25%.

- At least two out of five respondents in each year were providing ongoing support to employees experiencing mental health issues either in the workplace, while the employee was on sick leave or upon their return to work.

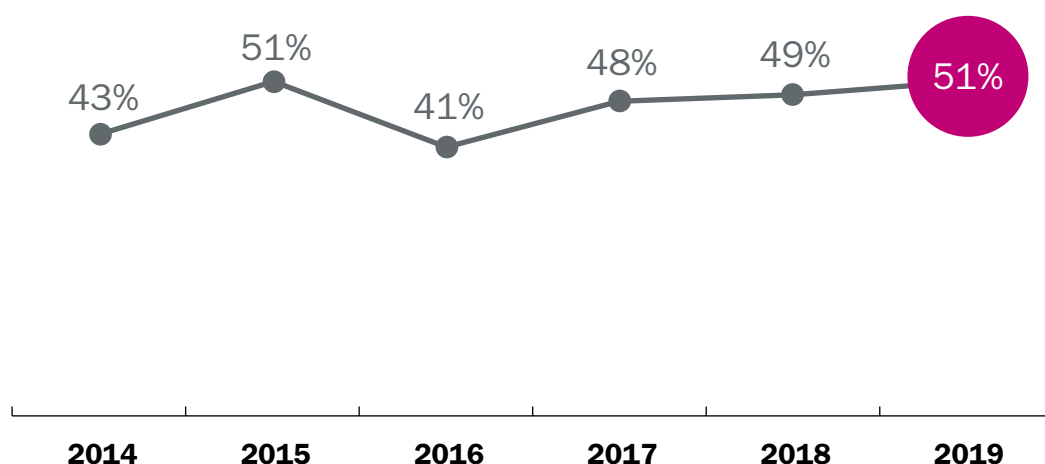


# Mental health disclosures

To encourage an employee to disclose a mental health difficulty requires an organisational culture where they believe it is “safe” to do so. Many may be concerned that disclosure will have a negative impact on their career prospects as well as their relationships with colleagues and managers. Among respondents to the survey, at least two out of five organisations in each year experienced a disclosure by an employee related to mental health issues.

In the past three years from 2017-2019 around half of all respondents experienced a disclosure related to mental health. This provides evidence both of the presence of mental health issues within workforces, as well as an indication of the existence of many organisational cultures where it is safe for employees to disclose.

## Proportion of organisations who experienced a disclosure



It is important to create and maintain a positive organisational culture that supports employee disclosures of mental ill health

# Dealing with disclosures

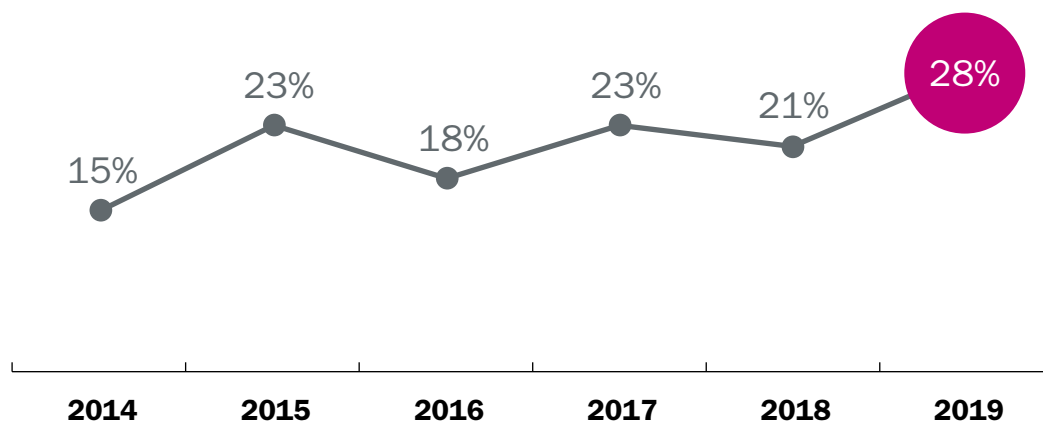
It is important that employees understand the practical steps involved when dealing with a disclosure related to mental health.

In developing a safe culture, reassurance can be provided to individuals by outlining the process that will be followed by the organisation if someone discloses a mental health issue. In this way it informs the employee who to talk to, what to expect and where to go for supports. This enables the employee to decide if they are ready to disclose and also ensures the manager is fully aware of how to support that disclosure.

Communication around mental health is a key component of a positive mental health culture.

The proportion of companies communicating the practical steps involved in dealing with disclosures of mental health issues has almost doubled over the life of the study, from 15% in 2014 to 28% in 2019, illustrating the increased priority given to mental health by organisations.

## Organisations who communicated steps for dealing with disclosures





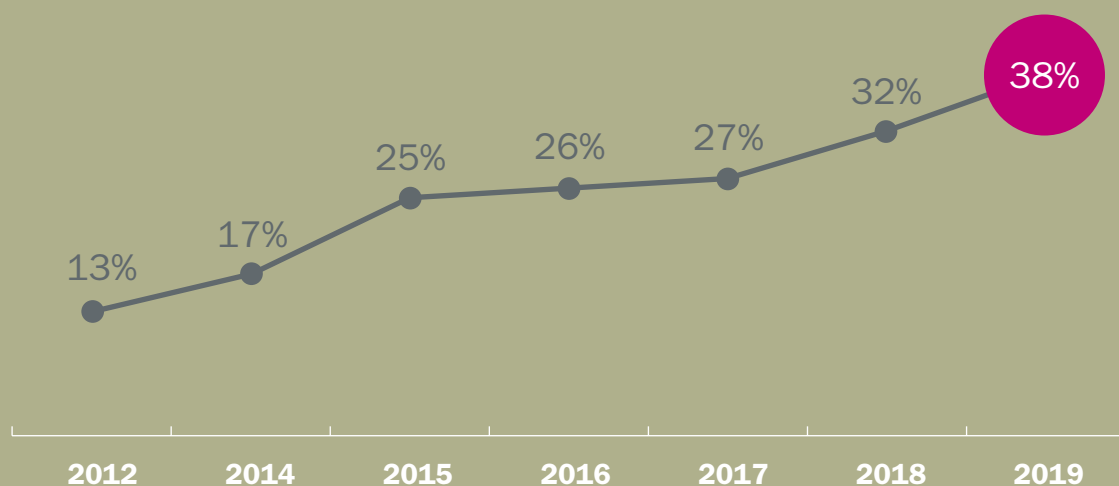
# Mental wellbeing campaign

Mental health remains an area that many people do not understand or may fear and as a result it is not talked about freely. Yet one in five people of working age experience a mental health problem, such as anxiety or depression. Dispelling the myths associated with mental health through wellbeing campaigns, will reduce the stigma and improve the quality of life for people who experience mental health conditions.

The proportion of companies engaged in mental wellbeing campaigns increased year on year from 13% in 2012 to almost three times this level (38%) in 2019. The importance of having a consistent organisation-wide approach to mental wellbeing, and not only managing periods of mental distress, is evident.

Providing employees with the information and tools to support their mental health enables individuals to be proactive around their own wellbeing and supportive of colleagues experiencing difficulties.

## Proportion of organisations with a mental wellbeing campaign

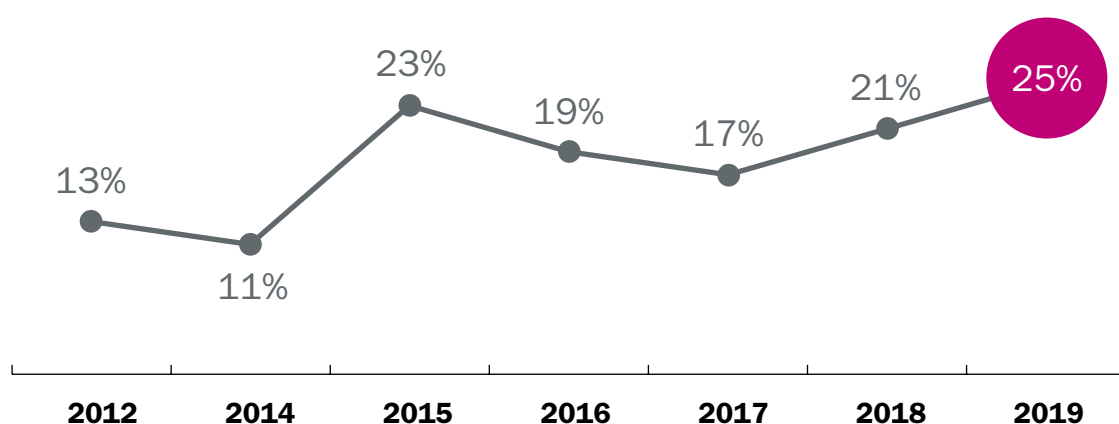


# Stress management/ resilience training

One constant in our personal and professional lives is the experience of unexpected crisis or change which impacts us as individuals. Supports for personal wellness in addition to greater investment in resilience approaches will enable a workforce to maintain their wellbeing and increase adaptability to prepare for future crises from a stronger foundation.

The proportion of organisations who offered stress management/resilience training has increased, almost doubling from one in ten (13%) companies in 2012, to a quarter (25%) of all respondent companies in 2019.

## Proportion of organisations with stress management/resilience training



*“Well-being campaigns at work can provide the necessary tools for employees to manage stress and to build resilience, enabling them to develop positive coping mechanisms that support their ongoing physical and mental health.”*

Geraldine Anderson, Ibec

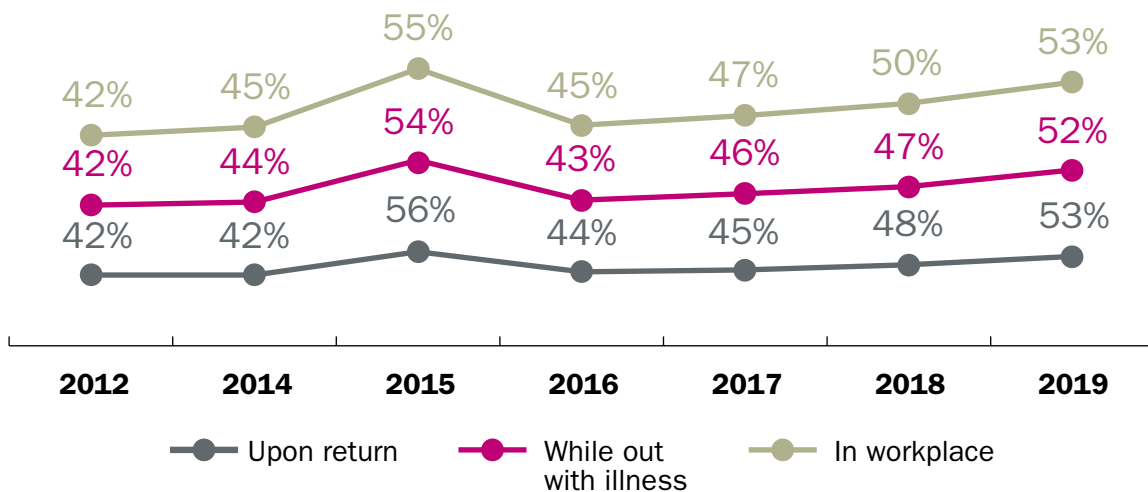
# Ongoing support

Many people will experience mental health issues over the course of a working life, in the same way that they experience physical illnesses. Employers clearly are improving their support level for employees ensuring better outcomes for those with difficulties and enabling them to retain and return to their jobs, once their recovery is complete.

At least two out of five (42%) organisations in each year provided ongoing support to employees suffering from mental health issues while in the workplace, while they were out due to an illness and upon their return to work.

Keeping communication channels open with an employee who is out due to mental ill health is good practice. The employer should have on-going contact with the employee assuring them of their value to the company, discussing any supports that would help them when they come back to work e.g. phased return and ascertaining when they will be fit to return.

## Proportion of organisations that provide on-going support





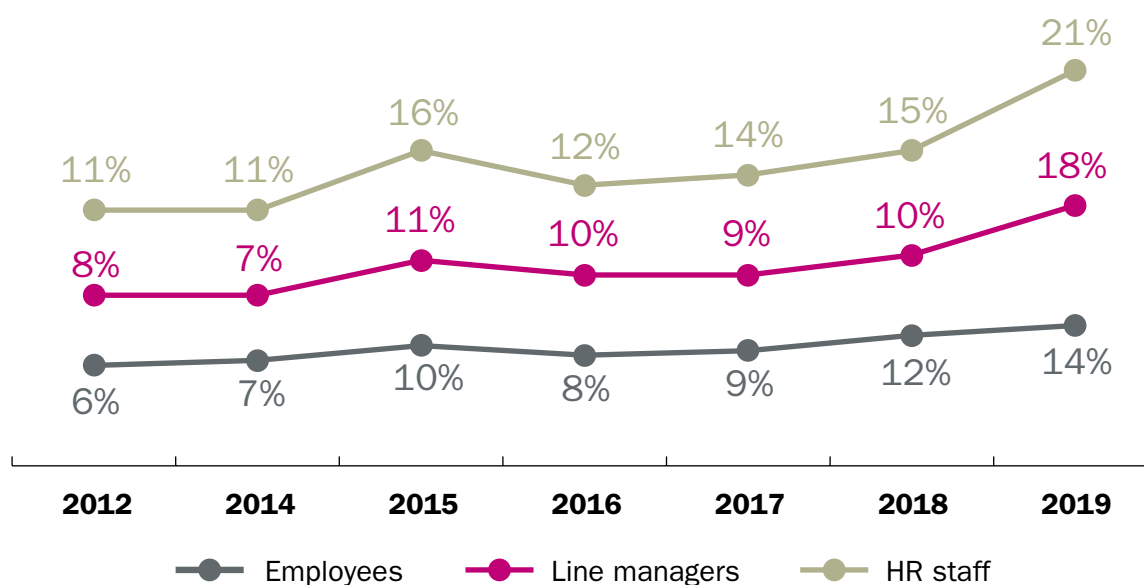
# Training

Understanding how to support colleagues who may be dealing with a mental health issue within the workplace is critical in ensuring that the correct supports are available and accessible by employees. The training of three key groups of staff: the HR team; line managers, and staff in general are explored in this study. Our findings show that the incidence of training provision to all levels of staff doubled between 2012 and 2019.

The biggest increases in training occurred with HR staff (from 11% to 21%) and line managers (from 8% to 18%) illustrating the particular importance of people in these roles being able to deal with mental health in the workplace. Engagement with all staff categories increased from 6% in 2012 to 14% in 2019.

Training for staff in how best to support colleagues with mental health difficulties is critical, particularly for those in front line management roles

## Proportion providing training for dealing with mental health problems



# What can you do?

The economic argument for treating mental wellbeing as an organisational priority and effectively managing mental health issues within the workplace is clear. The way in which an organisation approaches mental wellbeing can have serious and long-lasting impacts on its staff. Some actions that can be taken to support workplace mental health include the following:

- Lead from the top by presenting mental health and wellbeing in staff meetings and communications to embed a positive mental health culture within the organisation.
- Role model a positive culture and good practice in times of stress through colleagues sharing positive coping mechanisms that they use.
- Promote wellbeing campaigns at work such as talks on nutrition, stress/resilience training, sharing of mindfulness tools or team exercise challenges.
- Train mental health champions to provide mental health first aid as the first line of support for employees.
- Provide policies and procedures for individuals to navigate the supports available to them in times of strain on their mental health.
- Ensure training on supporting mental health and wellbeing is provided for key line managers and HR personnel, often the first contact for individuals with a mental health difficulty.
- Promote a clear roadmap around how mental illness, sick leave and return following absence is supported so employees are reassured of the approach.



# For further information



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Ibec Research:

<https://www.ibec.ie/connect-and-learn/research>

Ibec line managers guide:

[https://www.ibec.ie/employer-hub/corporate-wellness/  
an-employers-guide-to-mental-health-in-the-workplace](https://www.ibec.ie/employer-hub/corporate-wellness/an-employers-guide-to-mental-health-in-the-workplace)





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