PRE AND POST

COVID-19

WORKPLACE BURNOUT

The pandemic no one
is talking about.

August 2020

blind & journify

Burnout describes the long term build up of chronic, energy sapping, efficiently depleting, mood crushing workplace related stress. Unlike Covid-19, it has been part of our lives for years and was declared a legitimate workplace diagnosis by the World Health Organization in 2019. Prior to the global pandemic we were seeing a preoccupying trend, which is what inspired the need for a mental wellness solution like Journify. However, given the recent lifestyle adjustments and uncertainty caused by Covid-19, building resilience and monitoring burnout is more crucial than ever. This report aims to shed light on the impact on workplace burnout caused by the recent societal changes and workplace dynamics.

This report is based on data gathered in surveys to over 6,000 professionals conducted by anonymous professional networking platform Blind between February and July 2020.

BURNOUT & COVID-19
in the workplace

1 in 5
professionals are burnt out by their fear of job security

Burnout amongst professionals

61%
February 2020

73%
May 2020
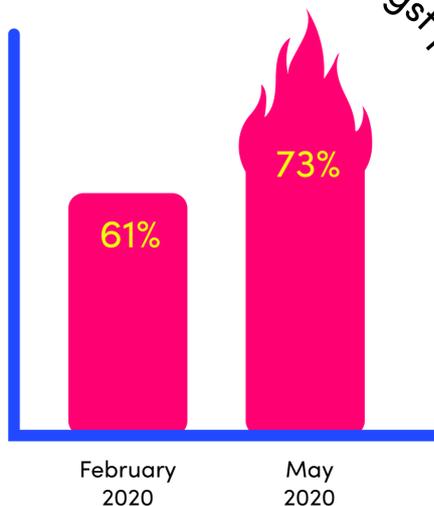
All surveyed companies reported levels of workplace burnout:

PRE-COVID
30%

MAY
60%
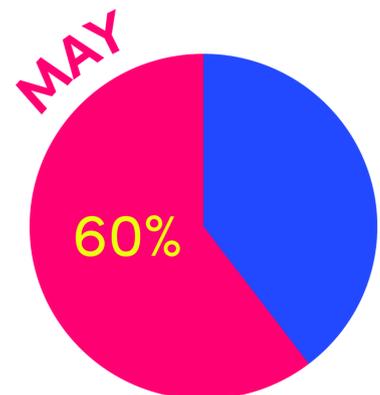
All statistics used from a Blind survey conducted between February 2020 and May 2020 in American companies with 6,789 responses.
https://medium.com/@teamblind/this-past-february-a-blind-survey-concluded-that-nearly-61-percent-of-professionals-are-burnt-out-c6ede02dfde7

Burnout was a big problem even before the pandemic, but recent events have clearly exacerbated its effects. As a collective we are more stressed, unhappy, fearful, frustrated, bored and unhealthy than we were six months ago. In May 2020, 75% of finance professionals and 73% of tech industry counterparts confessed to feeling burnt.

Those are staggering figures. What's even more alarming though, is that in those same professional groups – 58% of financiers and 61% of techies, reported feeling burnt out in February of this year – several weeks before the first European countries and US states enacted lockdown measures.What that means is, even in relatively normal times, well over half the workforce in key economic sectors are suffering prolonged, habitual and damaging mental distress at work on a daily basis.

BURNOUT amongst professionals

Finance Professionals | Tech Industry Professionals

75% | 58% | 61% | 73%

Feb 2020   May 2020   Feb 2020   May 2020
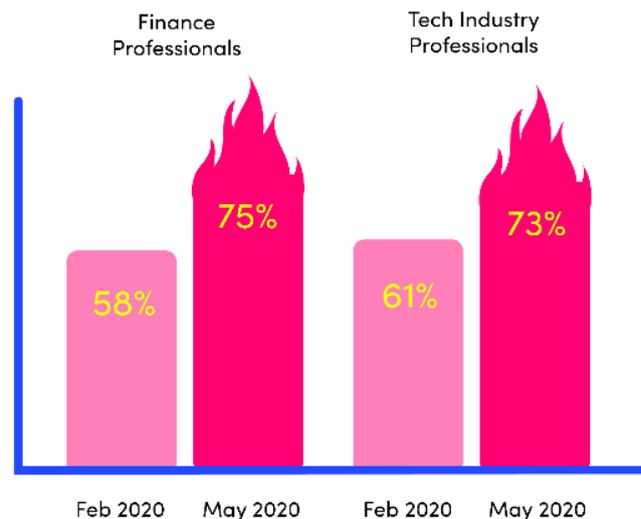
The reasons for this are not straightforward. Respondents cited factors such as unmanageable workloads, insufficient rewards, lack of control over work, unsupportive management and unfair treatment to explain their burnout.

Reasons for **BURNOUT** in the workplace

- Other 8.3%
- Unfair treatment 10.2%
- Burnout is not a problem 12.2%
- Unsupportive management 13.4%
- Lack of control over work 15%
- Insufficient rewards 15.7%
- Unmanageable workloads 25.3%
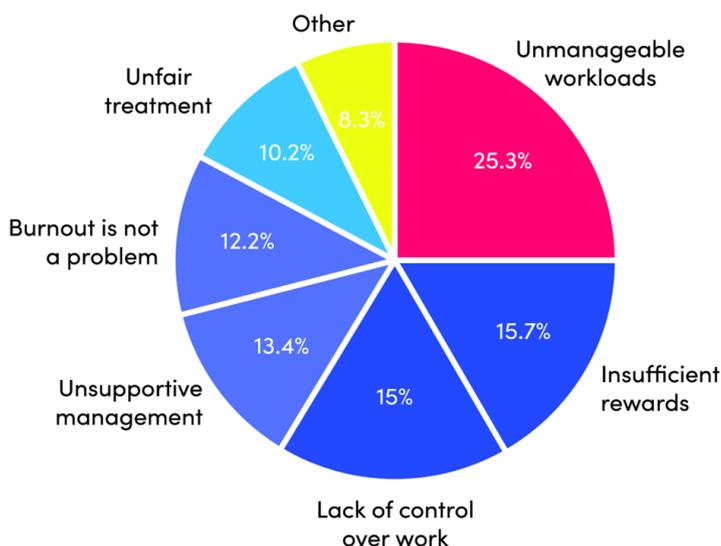
Behind these figures there are real consequences. Burnt out employees are significantly more likely to become disengaged, poorly organised, unproductive, absent and quit their jobs. A recent Gallup poll found ineffectiveness among such workers is costing their employers 34% of their annual salaries. So bad is the problem that the World Economic Forum estimates the global economy is footing a burnout bill of at least $280bn a year.

Taking the no.1 spot for the most burnt out organisation in February 2020 was Oracle, with 78% of its workers seriously stressed out. The tech giant was closely followed in the top 10 by such globally recognised brands as T-Mobile, Apple, PayPal, Groupon and JPMorgan Chase & Co. Even amongst the workforce at Bloomberg, statistically the least burnt out of those surveyed, 38% are still struggling.

The effects of workplace stress on the individual are also stark. Studies have consistently linked burnout to a plethora of physical and psychological diagnoses - including cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal pain, depressive symptoms, anxiety and insomnia. In the US, burnout is responsible for up to 8% of national spending on healthcare, and contributes to 120,000 deaths per year.

The 10 Most
BURNT OUT
Companies in Feburary 2020

Company	Percentage
Oracle	78.6%
T-Mobile	76.5%
Apple	76.2%
Cruise Automation	75%
PayPal	71.9%
Splunk	70.6%
Groupon	68.8%
JP Morgan Chase & Co	68.4%
Wayfair	68.2%
Lyft	66.7%
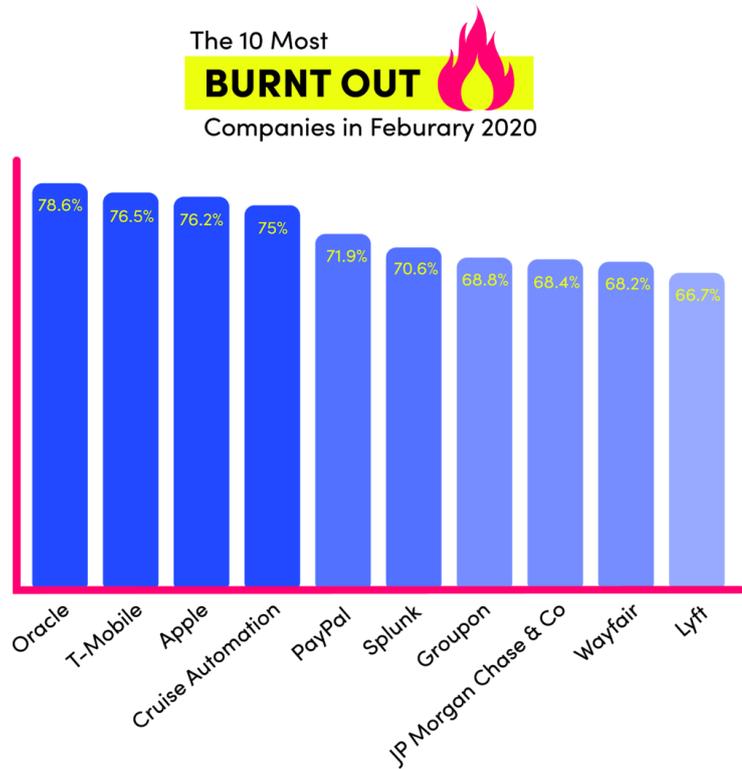
Whichever way you slice it, we are creating huge socio-economic problems for ourselves because of the way we work and live. It's making us unhappy, it's making us sick, and its costing our healthcare systems and economies billions.

 Taking the burnout assessment is an important first step in understanding the person's burnout level. It is unsurprising the working from home has made us more lonely and anxious. We [humans] are social beings, so we need to be more proactive about finding coping solutions to address stress and burnout.

Team at Sidekick
sidekick.org.uk

The pandemic has created a perfect storm for employees to burn out. People are working more hours each day without firm boundaries around when to work and when to stop working. Due to poor leadership, employees are spending most of their time worrying about losing their jobs and staying "online" all day.

Michael Levitt
Founder of Breakfast Leadership
www.breakfastleadership.com

PART 2
THE IMPACT OF WORKING FROM HOME

The Covid-19 pandemic has triggered a mass social experiment into working from home. Almost overnight, half of Americans and 40% of Europeans ditched offices for kitchen tables, colleagues for family members. The legacy of this unprecedented shift is likely to be profound and permanent. Whilst many initially felt the benefits of a domestic workspace, its novelty was quick to wear off as the reality of extended lockdowns set in across the world.

In June 2020, 64% of 3,279 professionals surveyed reported feeling lonely whilst working from home. This represents an 11% increase on the same metric during the early stages of lockdown in March. The problem is particularly bad among employees of tech giants Amazon and Apple, where 70% and 67% of workers are in need of company. Anxiety too is up by 5% during the same period – with 61% of professionals feeling increasingly jittery as lockdown has progressed.

On average, 58% of professionals believe their productivity has suffered at home – a 5% increase since the pandemic's early phases. Again it's the tech industry that leads the way, with 70% of Facebook and 66% of Google employees perceiving themselves as less effective. Perhaps not surprisingly, working parents juggling childcare commitments have it particularly bad. Of the 6,136 surveyed, 61% are regularly working an 3+ additional hours to complete their daily deliverables. With work related burnout already a huge problem even before the pandemic began, these statistics make for alarming reading.

The impacts of these trends on the individual are obvious – workers are generally unhappier, more worried and mentally distressed than they were six months ago. As a result, we're starting to see a drop off in productivity which could make business leaders sit up and take notice.

+11%
LONELINESS

+5%
ANXIETY

+3hrs
PER DAY
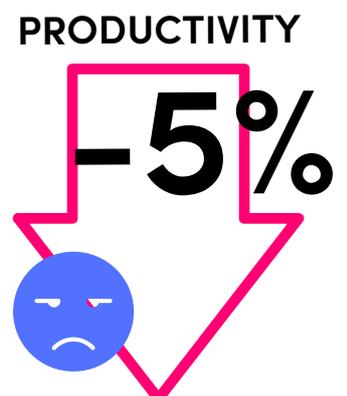
PRODUCTIVITY
−5%

PART 3
BEHIND "THE SCREENS"

Computer and mobile phone screens have long been part of our working lives. The flexibility, connectivity and sheer convenience they provide is undoubtedly a positive thing, and few white collar jobs now exist without them. Covid-19 has made these devices even more fundamental to the fabric of many millions of jobs across the world. Indeed, without the remote working capabilities they offer, the economic consequences of the pandemic would surely have been much worse. However, all this time spent alone behind screens at home poses a question – what is it doing to our mental health, and how does it impact a workplace burnout problem already at crisis point before the pandemic?

36%
feel under pressure to reply to work emails regardless of the time of the day.

Let's start with that staple of workplace life – emails. Emails are like taxes; we don't like them, we think we have too many of them, but when all's said and done they're probably necessary. One of the charges often levelled against portable devices for work is they create an always-on culture, where employees are obligated to be on call 24/7.

In all, we found that 36% of respondents felt under pressure to reply to a work email regardless of the time of day. That's a pretty huge number, considering how many hours were awake and how many emails we get during a typical day.

25% of respondents felt the "need to contact their boss often", or stay at their laptop so they appeared to be working hard. There is still a high correlation between "being online" with "perceived productivity". In an internal interview, we also uncovered that the need to reply to Slack messages is even more pressing than emails.

We also asked respondents whether they feel like their boss values them based on how many hours they work – with 28% saying yes, and 72% no.

1 in 4
believe they need to be online and contacting their bosses often.

Life's nature is to throw different challenges at us so we will inevitably go through chaos at times. A helpful first step to address workplace burnout is to clearly articulate the following:

☑ What we can and cannot control.

Life and businesses are characterised by the principles of VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous). We can't control everything, but we need to change our focus to what it is within our control and what we can influence.

☑ What is our role and our responsibility.

It's a common human reaction to blame work, society, politics, and others for what happens to us. However, it is important to remember as individuals that stress is not caused by circumstances, but by our thoughts and feelings about the circumstances. We all have more control than what we think in managing stress and burnout.

As an organisation, we need to be clear as to what is the role we play. People burn out because they lack meaning, purpose, direction and guidance. And this is what as an organisation we need to give our people. As an employee battling with burnout I felt alone. Although I didn't take responsibility, my organisation didn't create the environment to help me. We need to create environments focused on growing employees (and not breaking them).

☑ How do we want to respond to the situation.

Organisations need to invest more time and money in managing this problem and make it a priority. This isn't just a task for the HR department, but should be a goal for every group leader in the company (big or small). Here are some practical steps you can implement in the short term individually or with your teams:

ENCOURAGE CONVERSATIONS:
Assess how people are feeling, what are they challenged with, what are they struggling with, etc. We need to create a culture where people feel safe to have conversations, know how to empathize, know how to be candid when needed be and help people take more responsibility. This needs to be driven by and lead by the top leadership. In this way top leadership can demonstrate they are serious about the team's wellbeing.

FOCUS ON HEALTH & SAFETY:
What are people's home situations? Do they have a space where they can work comfortably and safely? Do they have the necessary equipment?

PROMOTE SOCIALISATION:
Create opportunities to socialise (even if virtual). Everyone should be involved in creating these spaces so take the lead but then assign responsibilities.

PROVIDE CLARITY & TRANSPARENCY:
People want to know "what is happening right now?" "what is going to happen in the future?" "how do we want to respond?" "what can each person do?". Everyone understands things may be changing but they're looking for leadership. Communicate early and leave the communication channels open.

Recommendations provided by Patricia Bloj
Founder at Metanoia Wellness Ltd
www.metanoiawellness.com

DISCOVER
YOUR ACTUAL BURNOUT LEVEL

We all have days when we feel low, run down, disengaged, or unmotivated. The thought of yet another day's tasks and objectives weighing on us long before we even make it out of bed. Usually a weekend of rest is enough to give us back that pep in our step. However, if you still feel this way consistently even after a good amount of rest, then you could be suffering from burnout. Psychologist Christina Maslach described the unique progression in working individuals as follows:

- You start to feel stressed and chronically fatigued as a result of excessive work demands.
- You become detached and cynical towards your job, with a lack of interest, enthusiasm or concern.
- You start to doubt your ability to perform a task well, with little desire to and reduced feelings of accomplishment and attainment as a result.

Burnout has severe consequences and while a severe case might be easier to spot, early signs of burnout tend to be overlooked (or confused with stress). To learn more, visit our Burnout Lab at journify.co.

You can also take the free burnout assessment on the website or download the Journify app to track your sleep, energy, motivation, and burnout levels over time. 5 minutes of journaling per day will also help you calm your mind, regain clarity, and boost your mindfulness.

FREE TEST

TAKE THE BURNOUT ASSESSMENT

TAKE TEST