



Mental health matters.  
Let's turn comms into action.

## The State of Mental Health for Communications Professionals

Urgent change is needed to educate, support  
and remove stigma around mental health in the  
comms industry



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# A rallying call for change



“One in two communications professionals experienced stress, anxiety, or burnout this past year.”

Let that sink in for a moment.



**While you might not be struggling right now, the next comms person you speak to might just be one of the 50% grappling with anxiety, stress or burnout at work.**

That’s an uncomfortably high number of industry professionals suffering. So why aren’t we talking about it?

Innovate Comms, Harvard and CCgroup have joined forces to conduct a survey with Coleman Parkes of 1,000 PR, marketing and comms professionals to understand their experiences of mental health in the workplace.

And the results are concerning. From the stigma around speaking up about challenges, to a lack of confidence in the industry’s ability to handle mental health issues, the findings shine a fluorescent light on the state of mental health for comms professionals today.

It’s clear that more needs to be done to re-energise the conversation and affect change – to better educate and support employees on both good and bad days.

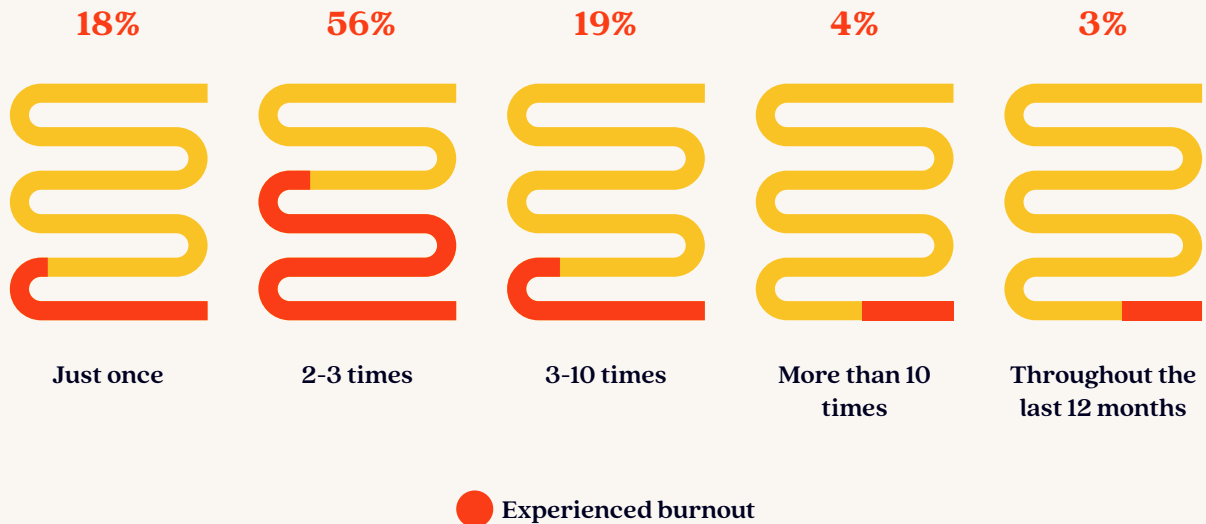
Change is possible. But we must bring everyone – from agencies to in-house professionals – together to help forge more supportive workplace environments and enable people to thrive.

If our research resonates with your experience, let us know your thoughts by emailing: [hello@stateofus.co.uk](mailto:hello@stateofus.co.uk). Because together we can affect real industry change for the better.

# What's really happening: Marketing and comms professionals and mental health



Frequency of severe stress,  
anxiety or burnout experiences



**We all have off-days. Maybe coverage didn't land or a big campaign's being pushed back... again.**

**But when a bad day turns into a bad week or month, and daily tasks start to feel insurmountable and overwhelming, there's probably something more going on.**

We found that one in two communications professionals have experienced severe stress, anxiety or burnout in the past twelve months – up to three times on average.

And while six in ten (60%) have taken time off work to rest, a third (34%) felt uncomfortable explaining the reason for needing time off.

So, is it all work related? The answer is no.

A third (36%) say they struggle with non-work-related mental health difficulties, 68% of whom have sought further professional support for their mental health condition. It's clear that a large majority of employees don't want to go it alone when it comes to getting support for their mental health.

But work is unquestionably a contributor to people's struggles, with 97% of people saying it has exacerbated a pre-existing mental health condition.

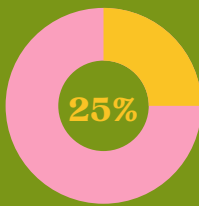
# So, what's behind poor mental health in the comms industry?



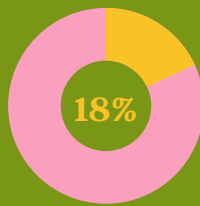
From an increase in workload to the office environment itself, many factors are compounding the mental health struggles of comms professionals – both in-house and agency side.

In fact, just under half (46%) say their workload intensity has increased over the past 12 months, with the main causes of severe stress, anxiety and burnout being the following:

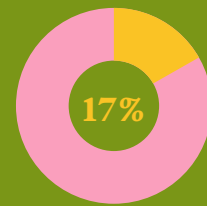
## Main cause of severe stress, anxiety or burnout



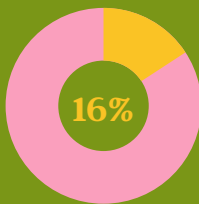
Too many demands on time



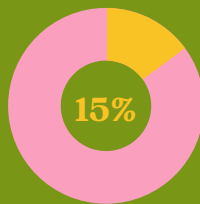
Corporate/Client bullies



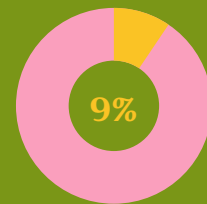
Long commute time



Poor pay



Poor culture



Diagnosed mental health condition from outside of work

 Experienced burnout

These results show the key causes of poor mental health for employees spread across a variety of sectors, locations and company sizes. But the stats above could look quite different on an individual company level, with the factors influencing anxiety, stress and burnout in one company not even touching the sides of another.

Identifying areas that are impacting mental health in the workplace is vital for reducing negative effects and finding opportunities to better support employees. But how do you figure out what employees are struggling with if no one's talking about their mental health in the workplace?



# Why aren't we talking about mental health in the workplace?



**Talking about mental health is deeply personal. And while hybrid working further blurred the lines between our home and work lives, many employees still don't feel comfortable sharing what's going on for them.**

**In fact, despite feeling the pressure, one in five people experiencing mental health issues decide to tell no one - and 45% of freelancers keep it to themselves.**

**45%** Concerns over letting others down.

stigma (44%), potential impact to long term career prospects (41%) and misconceptions about mental health challenges being caused by professional life (40%) were all highly ranked by respondents when deciding whether to share their mental health struggles in their company.

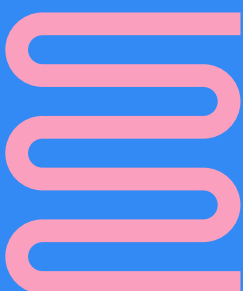
But these concerns aren't unfounded. A large majority (97%) of employees who reported their mental health challenges were unhappy with the changes their employer ultimately put in place.

And even more shockingly,

**78%** who reported mental health challenges to their employer went on to feel discriminated against by colleagues.

It's clear there are some serious barriers to people speaking up and sharing their mental health challenges in the workplace. These results highlight the dire situation we're in where employees are still afraid to share their personal experiences because of the stigma associated with mental health.

Organisations need to pay attention to the experiences of their employees. Building a culture that promotes an open and supportive environment for mental health won't happen overnight. It takes consistent, value-driven action and leading by example from the top-down.



# Follow-through is a BIG problem



**You wouldn't purposefully send a marketing email to customers with a broken hyperlink. You also probably wouldn't intentionally forget to add a 'link in bio' when you've published a post that says just that...**

Follow-through is big business in marketing and communications. When you say you're going to do something, you better make sure you do it. But the same can't be said for mental health in the workplace for comms professionals.

For those that did tell their employers they were struggling with poor mental health, more than half

**62%** didn't feel their managers followed up with an effective plan.

And on a company-wide scale, 27% of respondents don't think their company's formal mental health policies are sufficient to deal with the mental health challenges them and their colleagues are facing.

For many organisations, training to improve mental health in the workplace has been considered the answer. But for some, it's just a plaster to cover up the problem. Two in five (42%) believe that, despite lots of training, it doesn't make an impact – with too much focus on short-term solutions rather than long-term visions, goals and strategies.

With more than three quarters (86%) of respondents saying they take part in company mental health training annually or even more frequently; it's shocking that 42% still don't feel confident enough to spot signs of poor mental health at work.

A scatter-gun approach to mental health in the workplace clearly isn't working for employees. More than half

**56%** feel their company talks a lot about mental health but could do more to effectively support employees in this area.

This is a clear call for organisations to turn words into action and truly create an environment where being open about mental health is always welcomed.

# The time for change is now

**It's great that so many companies in the industry are increasingly talking about mental health in the workplace and being more open (81%). But more effective support needs to be put in place to support those grappling with poor mental health and prevent others from joining them.**

We need to shift the numbers in how employees perceive their company handling mental health in the workplace – with

**43%** not sure or rating their company poorly in its approach to mental health.

We all have mental health, and some days are better than others. But ultimately, we're stronger when we come together. And that's exactly why **State of Us** has been created.

A network for the marketing and comms industry that aims to bring both agencies and in-house professionals together to educate, support and be a force for change – forging more supportive environments which enable people to thrive.

Founded by **Innovate Comms, Harvard** and **CCgroup**, the network currently offers:

- Regular events ranging from training to education and sharing of lived experiences, as well as joint problem-solving
- A convening point for open dialogue, discussion and debate – and a trusted platform for sharing insights, news and advice to support positive mental health
- A centralised database of mental health first aid trainers across the industry

With plans for a mental health mentoring programme underway and ambitions to provide formal training and develop a charter for the industry, there's lots in store for the future of State of Us.







If you'd like to get involved, email:  
**hello@stateofus.co.uk**  
or connect with us on social  
for updates on the network's  
launches and events.

**www.stateofus.co.uk**

TikTok

LinkedIn

Instagram



**CCgroup**

**HAR  
VARD:**

