Unempathetic Workplaces Report 3X More Toxicity and Mental Health Issues

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Employees at EMPATHETIC organizations

Employees at UNEMPATHETIC organizations

Mental Health Issues

46% | 61%

Perceptions of Toxicity

14% | 45%

72% of Employees Say They're Not Willing to Sacrifice Their Mental Health for Work Anymore

For the last five years, CEOs have consistently been the most optimistic about how empathy shows up and supports mental health in the workplace. But employee feedback tells a different story, like toxic workplaces, lack of access to mental health benefits, and a willingness to leave for a better environment even at the cost of their pay.

Based on our 2025 State or Workplace Empathy findings, employees view flexibility, mental health support, and inclusive behaviors as top demonstrations of employer empathy in the workplace. When they're not present, the employee experience plummets—resulting in increased mental health issues and toxicity alongside lower feelings of belonging and connectedness. Gen Z (46%) is most likely to view their workplace as toxic.

However, CEOs aren't sharing this view. Only 8%, down 44 points from 2024, say that their workplace is toxic and only 23%, down 32 points from 2024, say they've experienced a mental health issue in the past year.

Only **8% of CEOs**, down 44 points YOY, view their workplace as toxic

Employees at unempathetic workplaces are more likely to feel isolated, disconnected, and that their culture is toxic

	Employees at EMPATHETIC organizations	Gaps between EMPATHETIC and UNEMPATHETIC workplace experience	Employees at UNEMPATHETIC organizations	CEOs overall
My company's culture is toxic	14%	31 points	45%	↓ 8% (-44 pts. YOY)
I feel like I belong at my company	93%	32 points	61%	90%
I feel connected to my peers at work	93%	23 points	70%	92%
I feel like I can be my true, authentic self at work	91%	35 points	56%	95%
I feel connected to my leaders when I'm at work	88%	45 points	43%	94%

Employees at Unempathetic Workplaces Are 1.3X More Likely to Experience a Mental Health Issue

When empathy is lacking in the workplace, it drives an increase in likelihood of experiencing a mental health issue. This is especially so for Gen Z and Millennials who are most likely to report experiencing a mental health issue at 68% and 62% respectively.

I've experienced a mental health issue in the past year:

46% Employees at **EMPATHETIC** organizations

61% Employees at **UNEMPATHETIC** organizations

CEOs also hold a more optimistic view about how their mental health is supported at work, with **94%** saying their company has created a safe environment for employees to come forward about their mental health experiences. Yet only **76% of employees** share this view.

94% CEOs reporting a safe workplace for mental health conversations

76% Employees who feel safe discussing mental health at work

Overall in 2025, 50% of employees report mental health issues, but burnout (61%) and loneliness (37%) are more likely at unempathetic organizations, while anxiety and depression remain fairly equal—underscoring the need for mental health benefits and support at work.

	Employees at **EMPATHETIC** organizations	Employees at **UNEMPATHETIC** organizations
Anxiety	74%	76%
Depression	59%	62%
Burnout	45%	61%
Loneliness	30%	37%
PTSD	16%	17%
Addiction or substance abuse	14%	12%
Eating disorders	11%	11%

A lack of support is partially to blame here with 43% of employees at unempathetic organizations saying their manager or leadership doesn't support being empathetic in the workplace and only 18% saying their CEO is empathetic.

More concerning, though, is how employees navigate these challenges in an unempathetic workplace.

When it comes to getting the right support, employees at unempathetic organizations are more hesitant to seek out support—if they even do at all

	Employees at EMPATHETIC organizations	Gaps between EMPATHETIC and UNEMPATHETIC workplace experience	Employees at UNEMPATHETIC organizations
I worked through a mental health issue myself without support	12%	**15 points**	27%
Seeking mental health support through my employer could have negative career repercussions	50%	**16 points**	66%
Companies view someone with mental health issues as weak or a burden	65%	**12 points**	77%
Society views someone with mental health issues as weak or a burden	75%	**9 points**	84%

This data highlights the powerful role organizational empathy plays in whether employees feel safe seeking mental health support.

- Employees at unempathetic organizations are **more than twice as likely (27% vs. 12%)** to face mental health struggles alone rather than seeking help.

- Fear of career repercussions is significantly **higher in unempathetic workplaces (66% vs. 50%)**, suggesting a culture where seeking help is seen as risky.

- Negative perceptions about mental health—both from companies and society—are **more prevalent among employees at unempathetic organizations**, reinforcing the stigma and likely contributing to silence and isolation.

A majority of all employees (61%), regardless of empathy perceptions at work, say they're ready to leave their current organization for one that has better mental health benefits.

Mental health benefits and flexibility policies are key to supporting employee wellbeing at work. But misaligned priorities are driving a wedge between employees and these must-have benefits

Remote work is seen as critical to well-being by **79% of employees**, especially among **Gen Z (87%)** and **Millennials (85%)**. Despite this, there are profound gaps between the most empathetic benefits employees value—like flexible work—and the benefits they say they have access to. CEOs report greater access and use of the same flexible benefits, such as **flexible hours (51%)** and **work location (43%)**, compared to employees at **29%** and **21%** respectively—revealing a significant disconnect between leadership perception and employee experience.

	Employee's ranking of empathy	Gaps between benefits employees say are empathetic vs. offered	Employees who say they have this benefit	CEOs who say they have this benefit
Extended mental health benefits	92%	70 points	22%	34%
Flexible work hours	91%	52 points	39%	51%
Flexible work location	88%	58 points	30%	43%

Is a toxic and inflexible workplace your organization's $1,000,000 mistake?

According to the **Work Institute's 2025 Retention** report, the cost to replace an employee is **33% or more** of their salary. With **54% of employees** at unempathetic organizations saying they're likely to change jobs in the next six months, this could cost firms with an average 2,000 employee base millions, depending on the organization's average salary range.

Employees are fed up and willing to leave for organizations that are more aligned with their needs. **27% of employees** say their workplace isn't empathetic. These same employees are 1.5X more likely to change jobs in the next 6 months.

60% are willing to leave their current job if their employer required them to be back in the office full time. **Millennials (56%)** and **Boomers (65%)** are the most likely to do so.

72% employees say they're not willing to sacrifice their mental health for work anymore.

42% of employees and **62% of HR** say that return to office (RTO) policies have negatively impacted their mental health.

Learn more about how an empathetic workplace is more than just a perk—it's critical to the bottom line. Employees want benefits and policies to help them perform at their best at work and in their personal life. Get the full story and HR's empathetic benefits strategy at **businessolver.com/workplace-empathy**

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