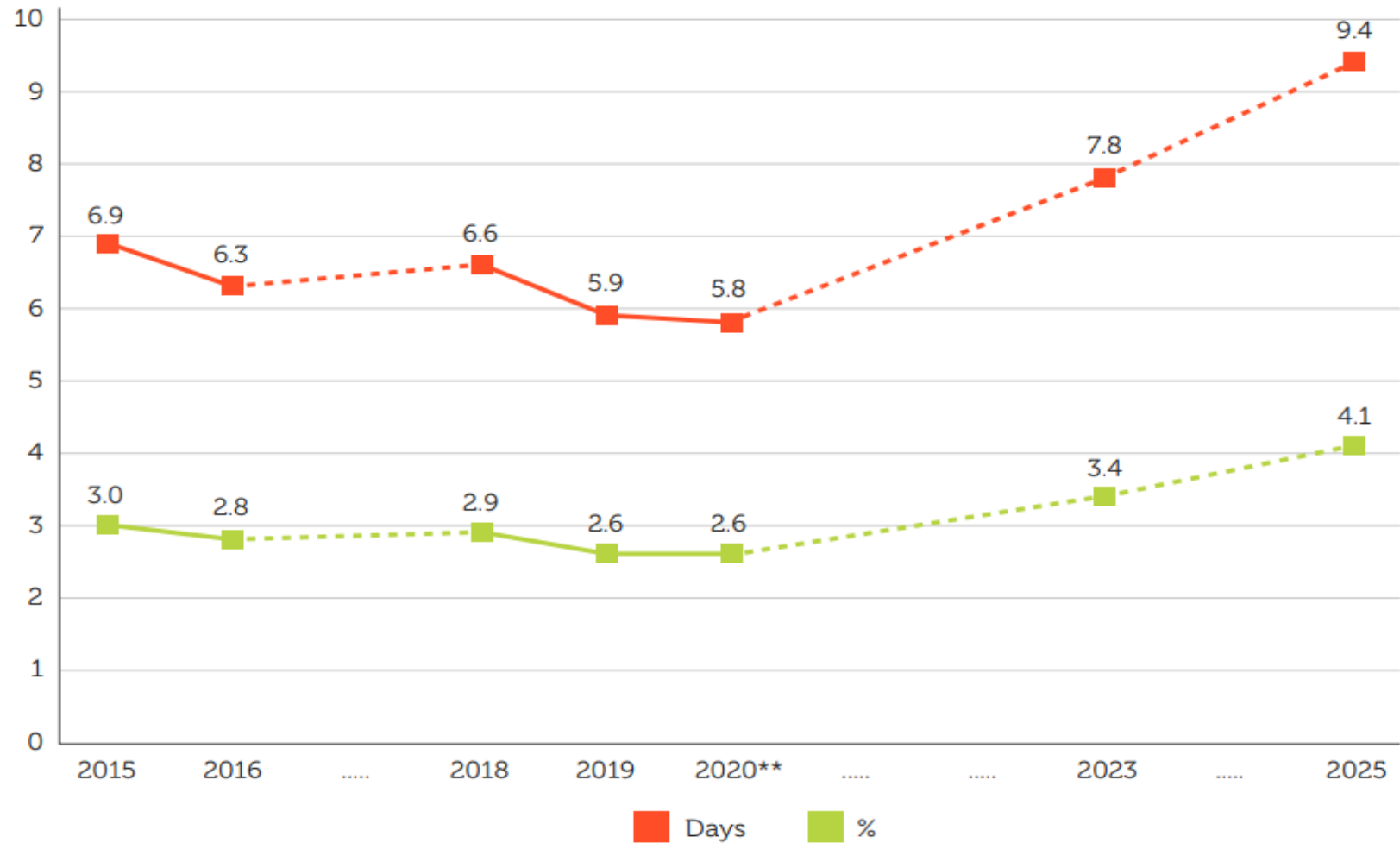CIPD

Managing and supporting employee health and wellbeing

Ben Willmott
CIPD Head of Public Policy

Average level of employee absence, per employee per annum

Days: 6.9 (2015), 6.3 (2016), 6.6 (2018), 5.9 (2019), 5.8 (2020**), 7.8 (2023), 9.4 (2025)

%: 3.0 (2015), 2.8 (2016), 2.9 (2018), 2.6 (2019), 2.6 (2020**), 3.4 (2023), 4.1 (2025)

Legend: Days, %

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Average number of days lost per employee per year, by sector
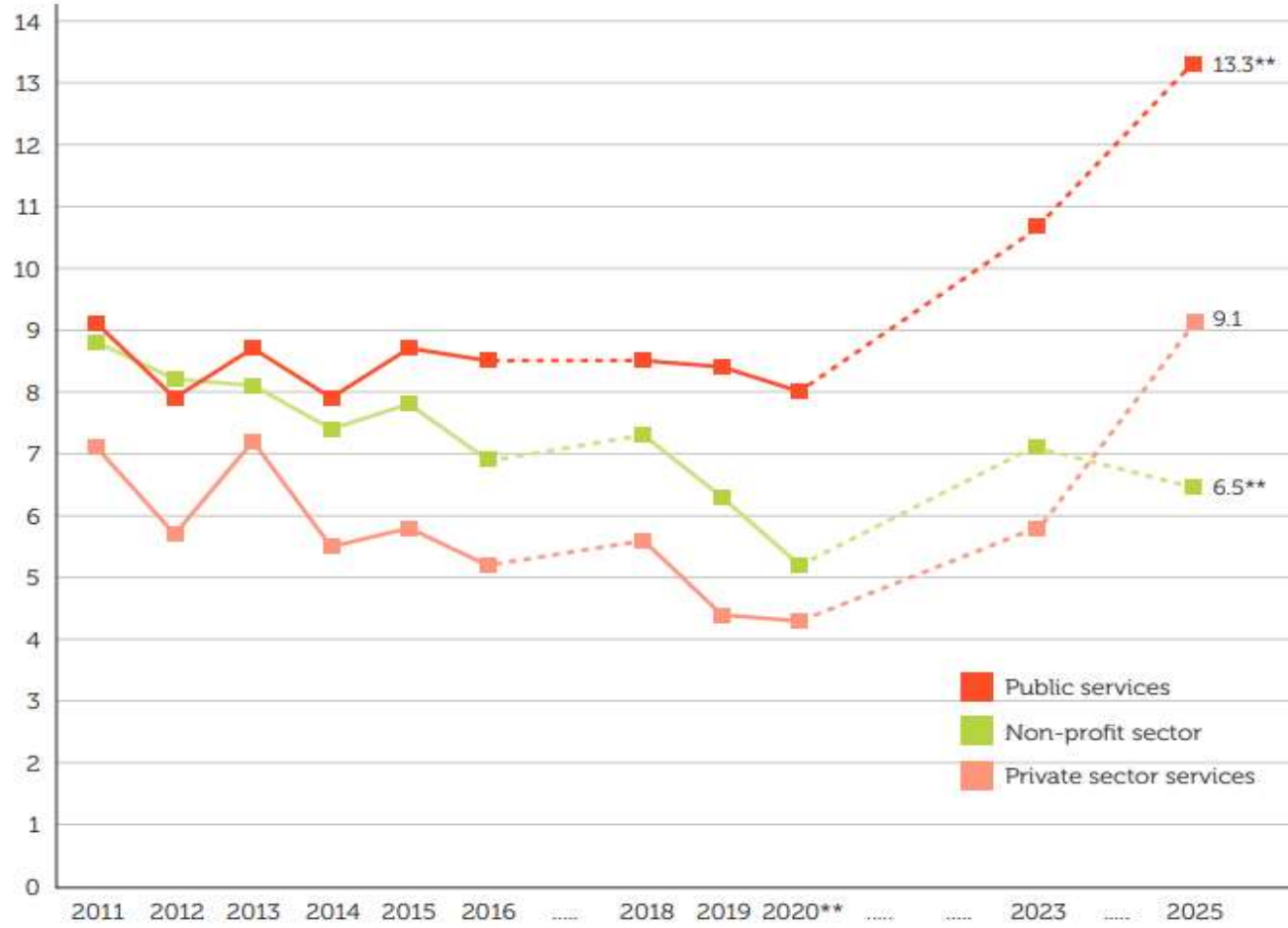
In top three causes of short-term absence (up to four weeks)

Minor illness (eg colds/flu, stomach upsets, headaches): 78

Mental ill health (eg depression or anxiety): 29

Caring responsibilities for children: 26

Stress: 26

Musculoskeletal injuries (eg neck strains or repetitive strain injury, including back pain): 25

In top three causes of long-term absence (four weeks or longer)

Mental ill health (eg depression or anxiety): 41

Musculoskeletal injuries (eg neck strains or repetitive strain injury, including back pain): 31

Other long-term health conditions (eg neurological or respiratory conditions, cancer): 30

Stress: 28
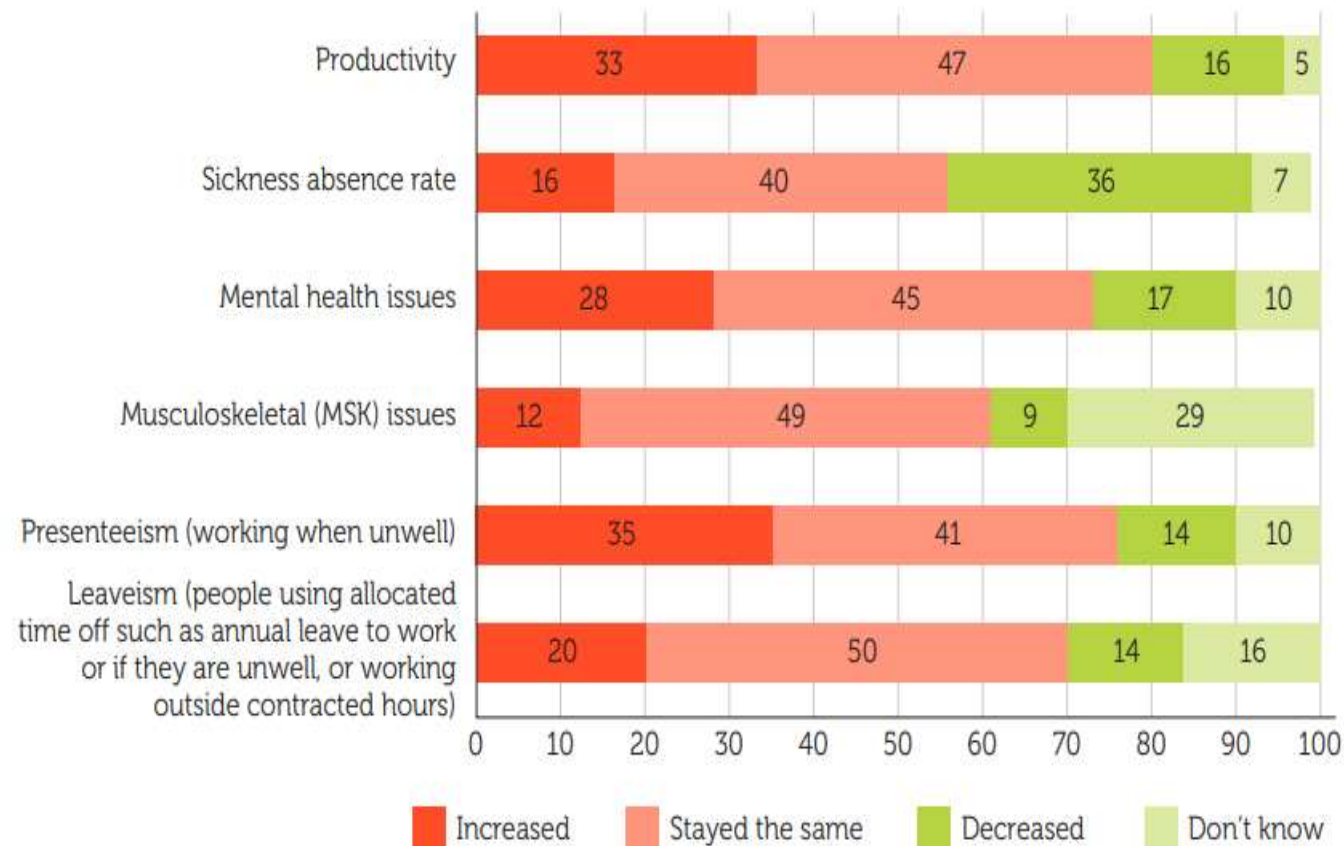
Acute medical conditions (eg stroke, heart attack): 24
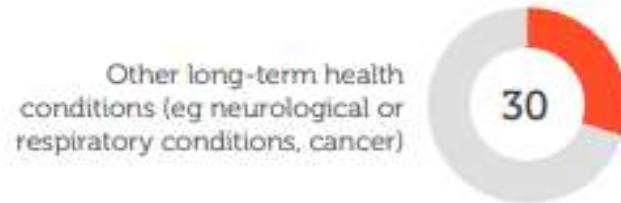
Changes reported as a consequence of employees working from home
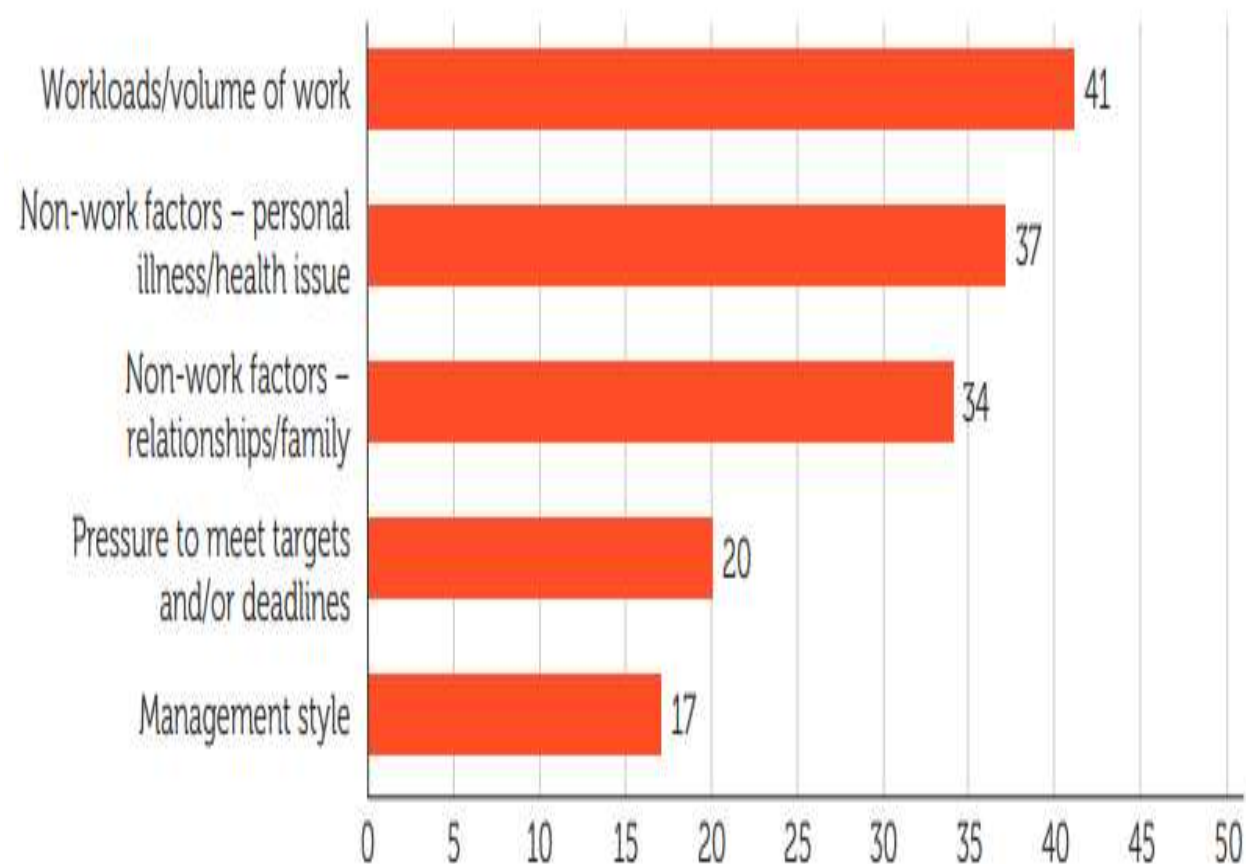

Base: n=813 (organisations that have employees who work from home).

Managing stress and mental health

CIPD

Figure 8: The most common causes of stress-related absence (in top three causes, % of respondents)
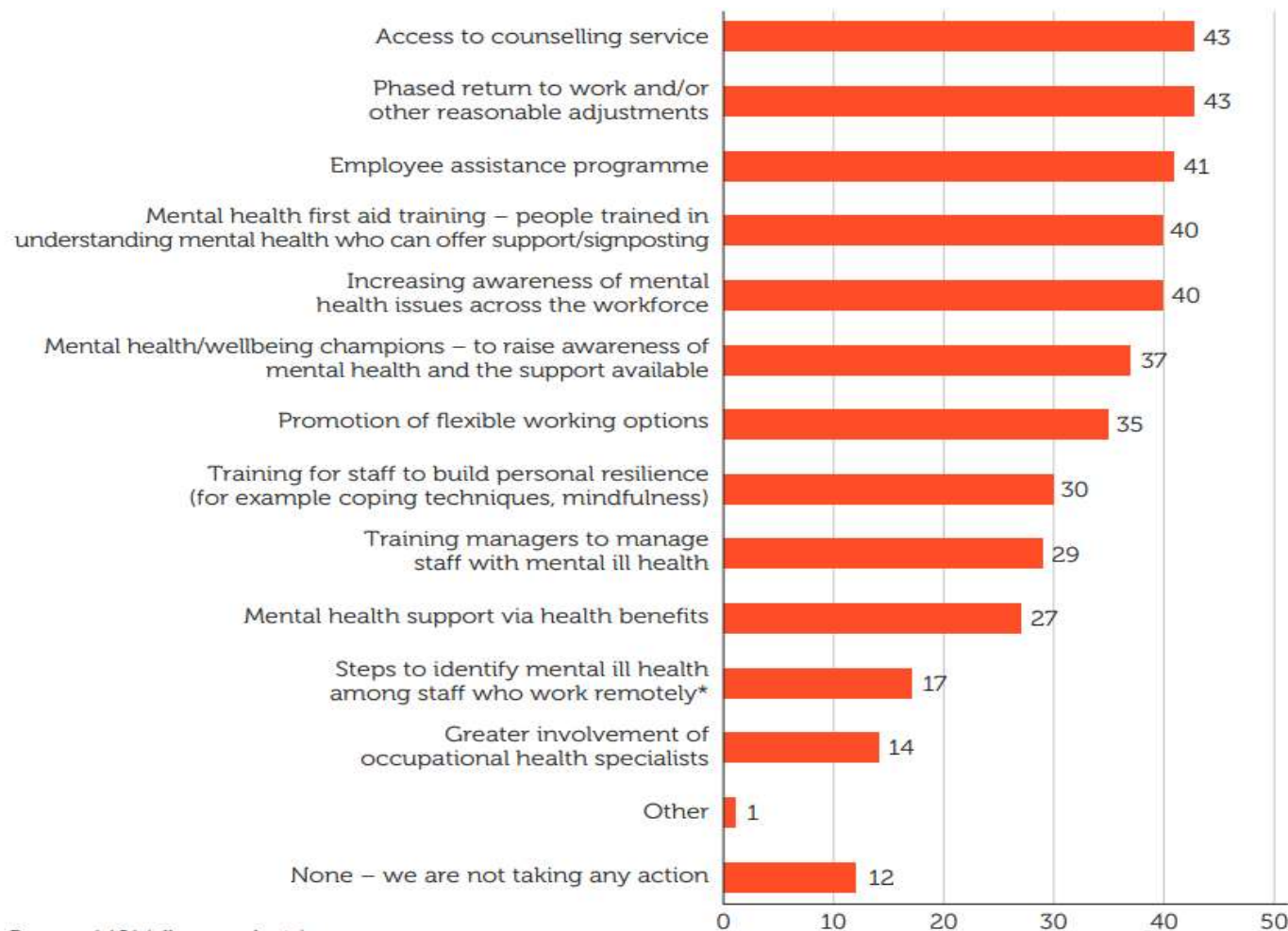
Cause	%
Workloads/volume of work	41
Non-work factors – personal illness/health issue	37
Non-work factors – relationships/family	34
Pressure to meet targets and/or deadlines	20
Management style	17

Methods used to identify and reduce stress at work

Flexible working options/improved work–life balance — 61
Employee assistance programme — 52
Staff surveys and/or focus groups to identify causes — 48
Training for line managers to manage stress — 43
Training aimed at building personal resilience (eg coping techniques, mindfulness) — 39
Risk assessments/stress audits — 38
Stress management training for the whole workforce — 31
Written stress policy/guidance — 30
Involvement of occupational health specialists — 29
Changes in work organisation, such as job role adaptations — 28
Health and Safety Executive's Management Standards — 20

Base: n=681 (organisations taking steps to identify and reduce stress in the workplace).

Actions taken to manage and support mental health at work

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Access to counselling service — 43
Phased return to work and/or other reasonable adjustments — 43
Employee assistance programme — 41
Mental health first aid training – people trained in understanding mental health who can offer support/signposting — 40
Increasing awareness of mental health issues across the workforce — 40
Mental health/wellbeing champions – to raise awareness of mental health and the support available — 37
Promotion of flexible working options — 35
Training for staff to build personal resilience (for example coping techniques, mindfulness) — 30
Training managers to manage staff with mental ill health — 29
Mental health support via health benefits — 27
Steps to identify mental ill health among staff who work remotely* — 17
Greater involvement of occupational health specialists — 14
Other — 1
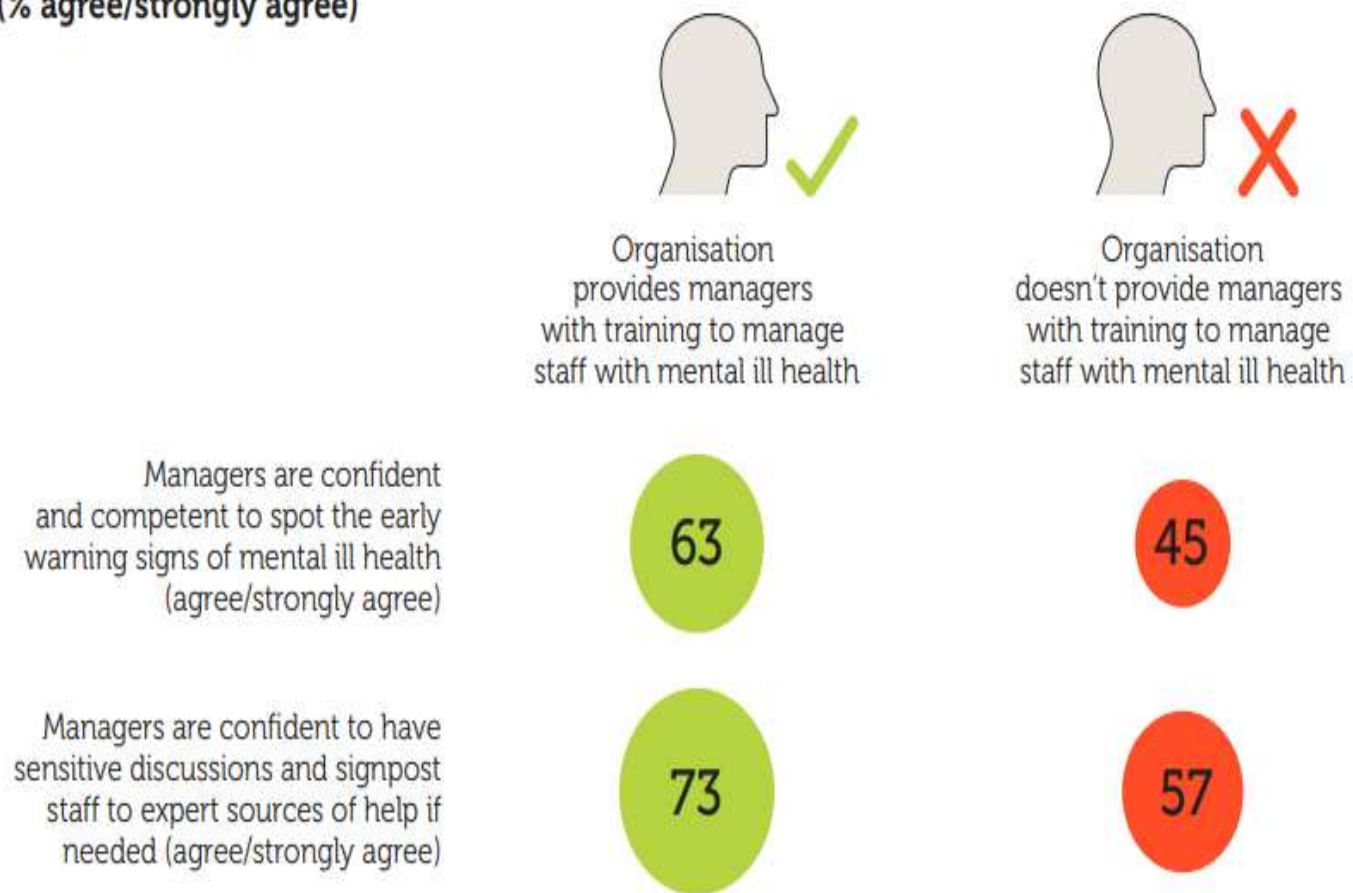None – we are not taking any action — 12

Base: n=1,101 (all respondents).
*% of organisations with homeworkers (base: n=813).

## Figure 13: Mental health training for managers and their skills and competencies (% agree/strongly agree)

Organisation provides managers with training to manage staff with mental ill health ✓

Organisation doesn't provide managers with training to manage staff with mental ill health ✗

Managers are confident and competent to spot the early warning signs of mental ill health (agree/strongly agree)

63   45

Managers are confident to have sensitive discussions and signpost staff to expert sources of help if needed (agree/strongly agree)

73   57

Base: n=1,101 (all respondents).

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The people management behaviours that support health, wellbeing and engagement

Five key behavioural areas underpin effective people management:

- Being open, fair and consistent

- Handling conflict and people management issues

- Providing knowledge clarity and guidance

- Building and sustaining relationships

- Supporting development

Good people management establishes foundation for health and wellbeing
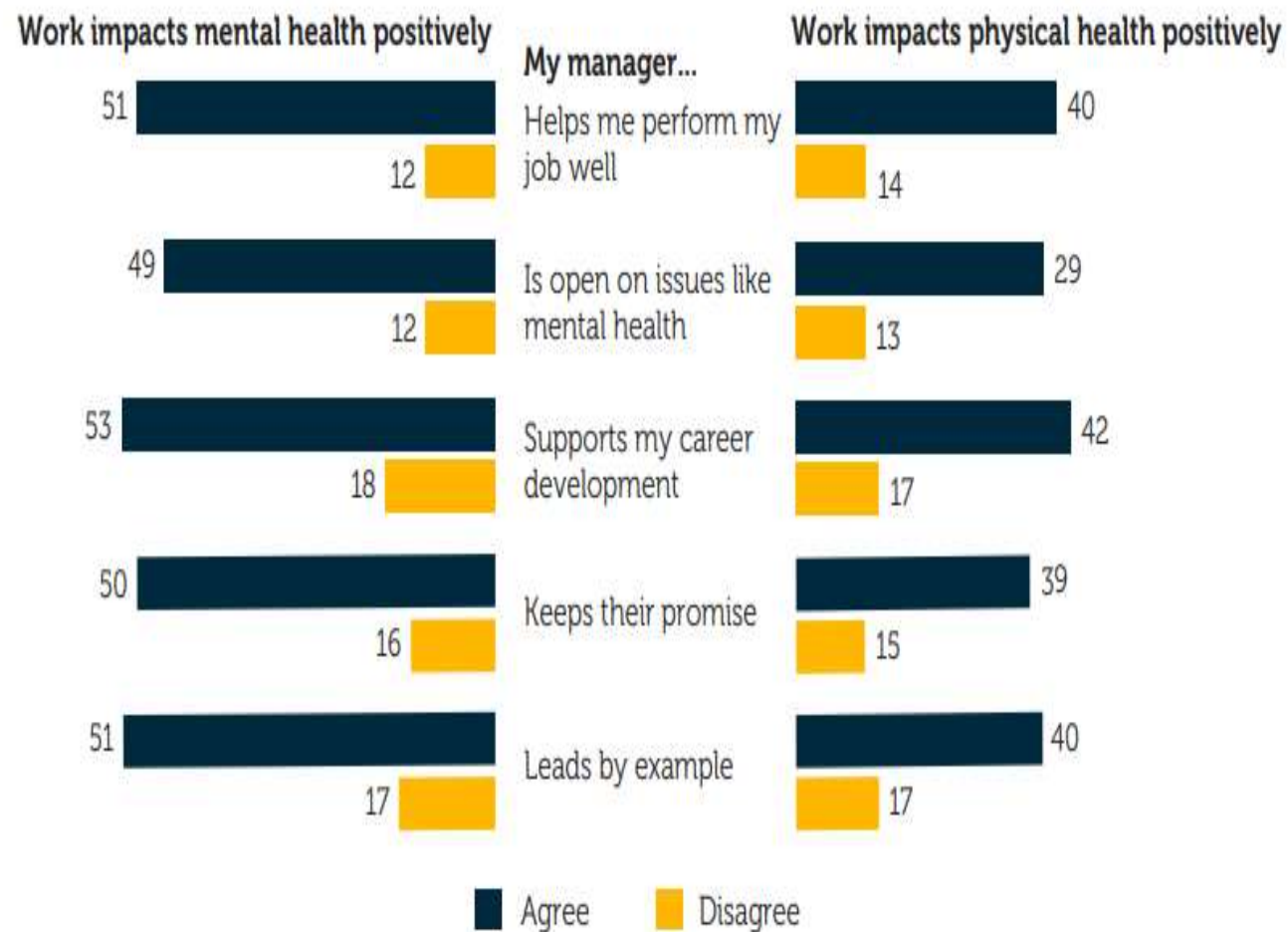
Line managers are key to supporting the health and retention of people with long-term health conditions and disabilities:
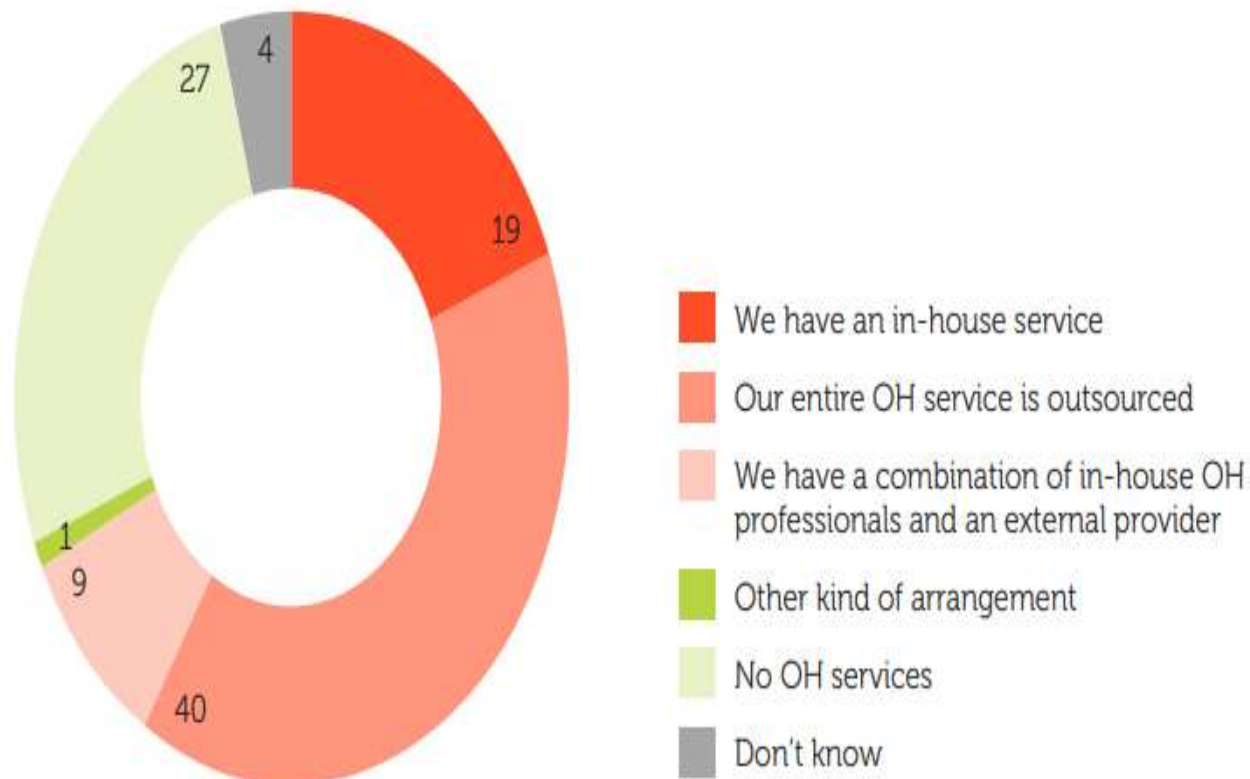
- They implement the HR policies and people management practices that will affect how well supported people with long-term health conditions or disabilities will feel

- Will typically be the first point of contact if someone needs to discuss their health concerns or a change or adjustment to their work or working hours

- Is usually responsible for managing absence and keeping in touch if someone is off work ill or because of their disability, as well as supporting an effective return to work.

Key principles to support effective returns to work

1. Maintain communication during absence.

2. Prepare for the return to work.

3. Support the employee and manager during the immediate return.

4. Support the employee and manager on an ongoing basis after the return.

CIPD

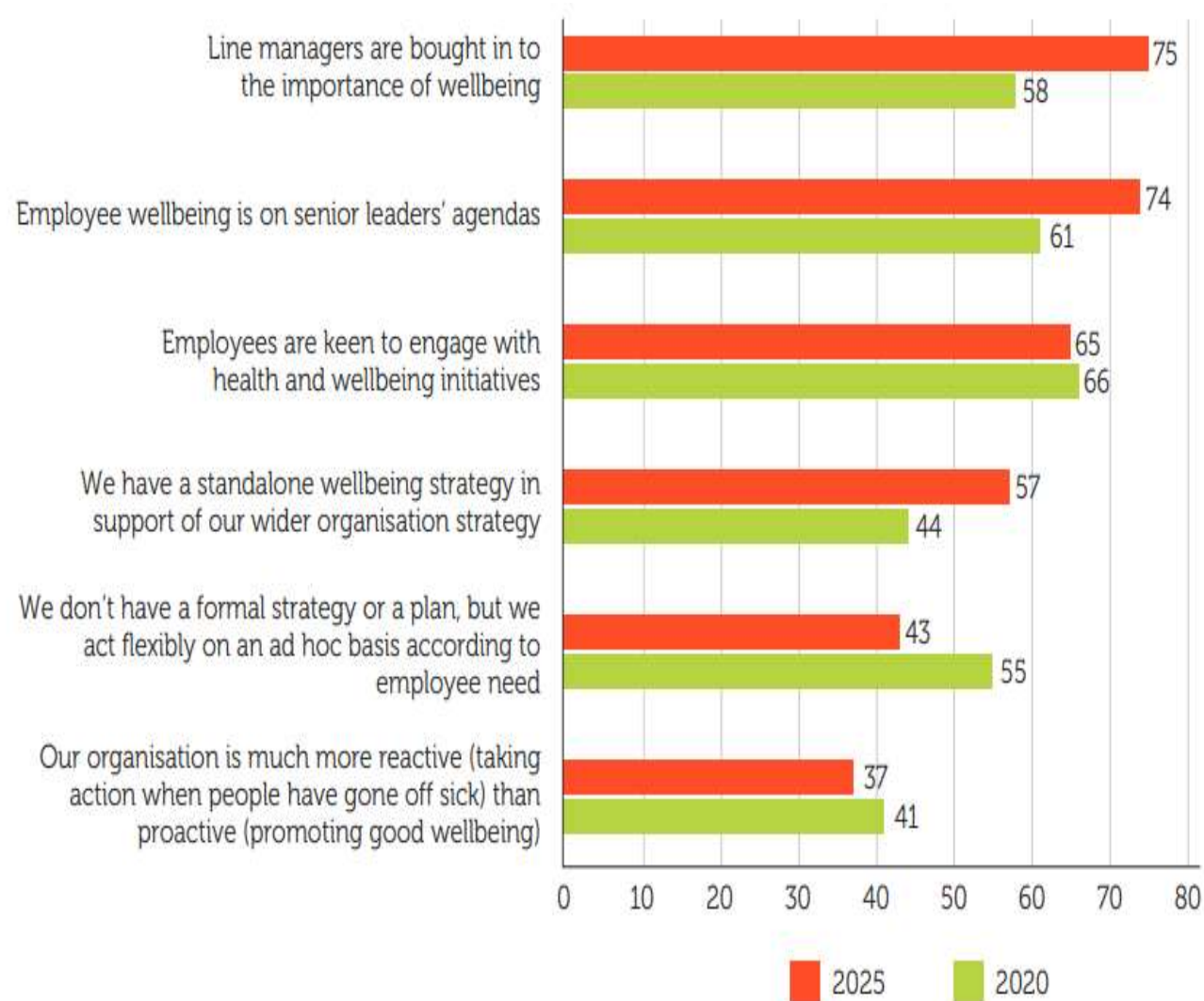# Provision of occupational health arrangements

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Donut chart showing:
- 19 — We have an in-house service
- 40 — Our entire OH service is outsourced
- 9 — We have a combination of in-house OH professionals and an external provider
- 1 — Other kind of arrangement
- 27 — No OH services
- 4 — Don't know

Legend:
- We have an in-house service
- Our entire OH service is outsourced
- We have a combination of in-house OH professionals and an external provider
- Other kind of arrangement
- No OH services
- Don't know

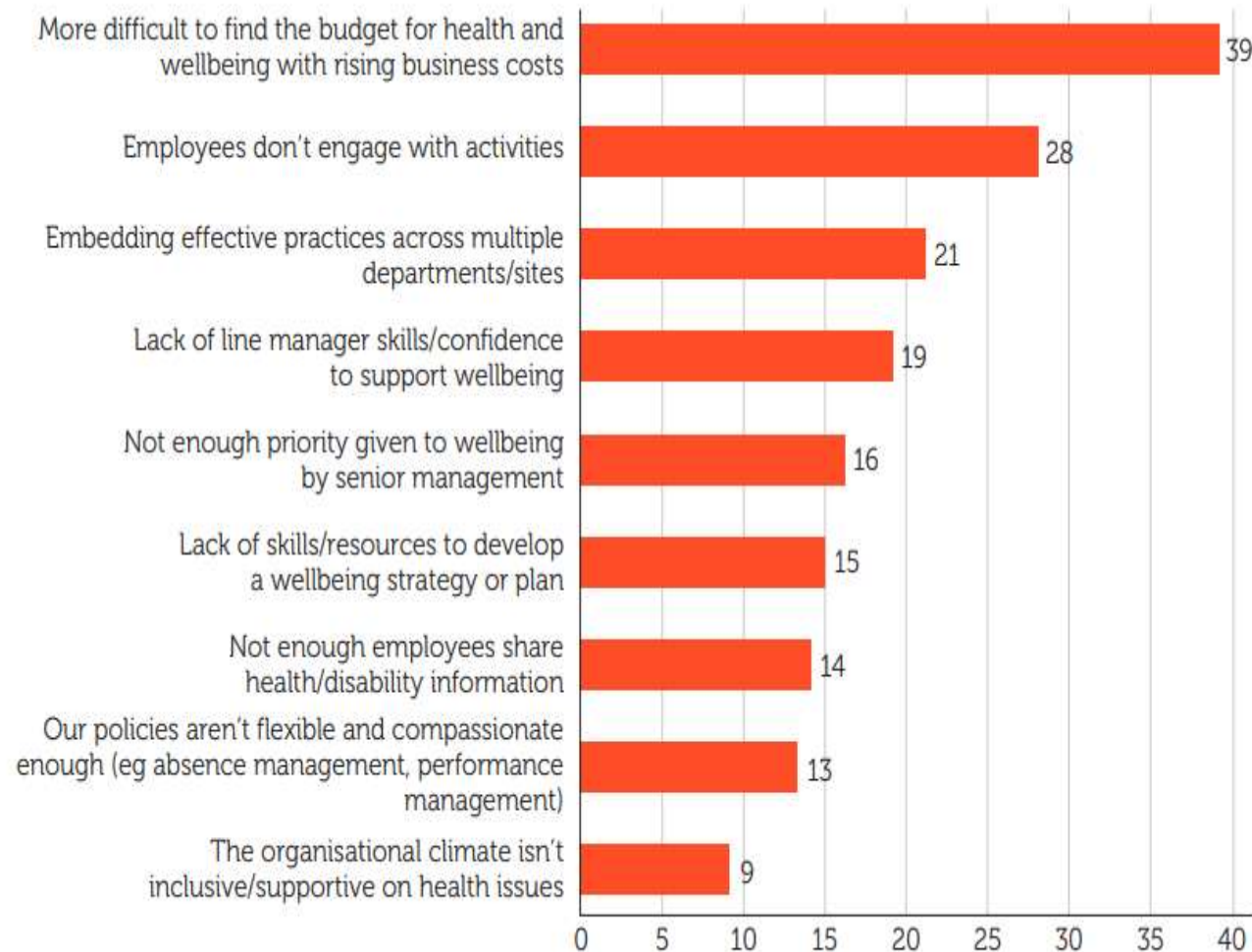Base: n=1,101 (all respondents).

Most commonly provided OH services

- Assessing fitness to work regarding ill-health capability, dismissal or ill-health retirement (59%

- Advising on 'reasonable adjustments' (58%)

- Providing independent and professional diagnosis, prognosis and advice on staff unable to work due to ill health (47%)

- Advising on compliance under the Equality Act 2010, eg disability, pregnancy and age discrimination (41%)

- Developing solutions to keep staff with health issues at work (41%)

- Providing confidential health advice and counselling to employees (40%)

- Ensuring compliance with health and safety regulations (38%)

- Carrying out pre-employment or pre-placement health assessments (37%)

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Key opportunities for employee health and wellbeing over the next 12 months

Improve employee health and wellbeing	54
Boost employee engagement	39
Reduce sickness absence	39
Improve employee performance	38
Improve candidate attraction and recruitment	25
Embed as part of our employee retention strategy	21
Contribute to the environmental, social and governance (ESG) agenda	13

Base: n=1,101 (all respondents).