

## [Inquiry into teacher recruitment and retention](#)

Following the meeting on 5 June 2025, NASUWT provide an analysis of the figures from the survey carried out with its Members.

Response from NEU:

Please find attached a summary of our Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey results from 2021 and 2023.

The 2023 summary doesn't include the stats on those planning or thinking of leaving the profession. However, those stats are below:

Survey Respondents – 2169 (1734 teachers)

Planning on leaving the sector – 294 (248 teachers – 14.3%)

Thinking of leaving the sector – 912 (751 teachers – 43.3%)

So, total teachers planning or thinking about leaving the sector in 2023 – 999 (57.6%).

A breakdown of how long they had been working and their age ranges are in the table below. Some did not inform us of how long they had been working as a teacher (2023 survey).

Time as a teacher	Planning on leaving	Thinking of leaving
less than 1 year	0	7
1-5 years	81	10
6-10 years	14	100
over 10 years	224	562

Age range	Planning on leaving	Thinking of leaving
18-24	1	11

25-34	18	159
35-44	52	226
45-54	92	260
55-64	77	92
65+	8	1

We did not ask them for a reason why they were thinking of leaving but as it's a mental health and wellbeing survey, we can only assume that it's due to the stress of the job (workload, lack of work/life balance, etc.).

What was also very concerning was that in 2021, 10% of respondents had suicidal thoughts, in 2023 that rose to 18%. Both these figures are in the attached summaries.

# NEU Cymru Mental Health & Wellbeing Survey 2021

Motions to Conference Cymru on the growing mental health crisis in Wales’s education sector noted that funding issues, excessive workload, testing, scrutiny, and accountability were significant factors in the increasing number of members struggling to cope and developing mental health problems.

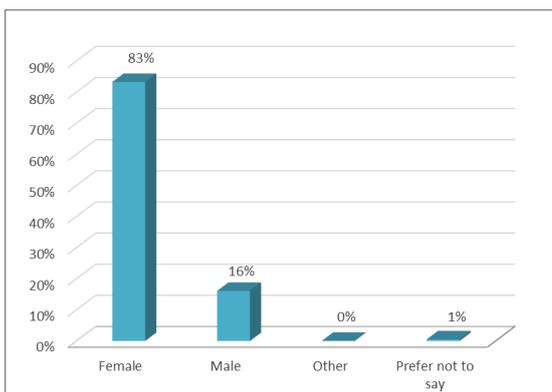
In July 2021, NEU Cymru, supported by Unite and GMB unions, conducted a mental health and wellbeing survey of education sector workers across Wales. The survey attracted over 1600 responses from workers across all job roles in schools, colleges, and universities and highlighted the strength of feeling amongst our education sector workforce.

## Key Findings

The main findings from the survey indicate that:

- Excessive workload continues to be the leading cause of workplace stress and mental health issues
- There is a significant lack of support measures in place for workers experiencing poor mental health
- Negative workplace cultures surrounding mental health mean that only a small percentage of individuals access help or support for mental health problems

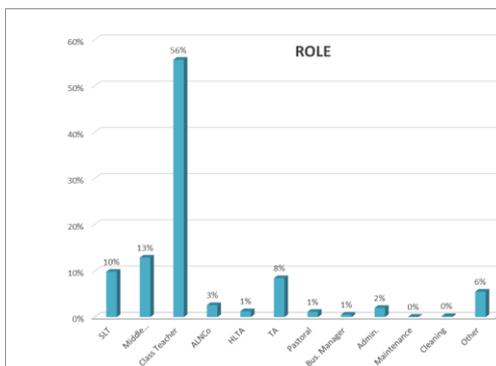
## Survey Overview



*With an average ratio of 75% female and 25% for the teaching profession in Wales, the overall survey responses are slightly more representative of women.*

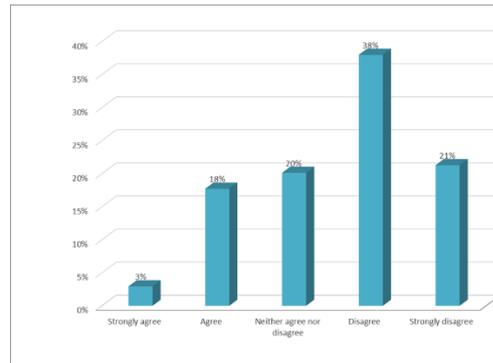
All Local Authorities in Wales took part in the survey and all four Consortia were represented in the responses. The vast majority of survey responses came from workers in the primary and secondary sectors, with a small number of responses received from Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) workers. All age groups were represented with almost two thirds of responders aged between 25 and 54.

*Given that most responses- to this survey came from classroom practitioners (88%), we feel it is prudent to focus on the responses received from those particular job roles and types in this report.*



## Factors Affecting Mental Health

*Only 21% of people indicated that they felt they had a good work-life balance.*

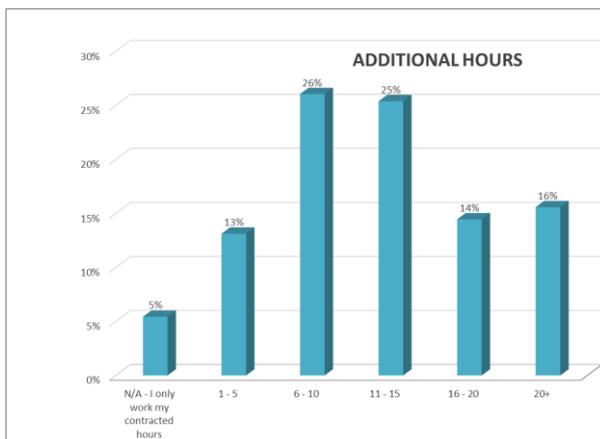


With 95% of survey respondents indicating that they work more than their contracted hours, workload continues to be a huge issue for the sector.

Almost half (47%) of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that their personal relationships had suffered due to problems at work.

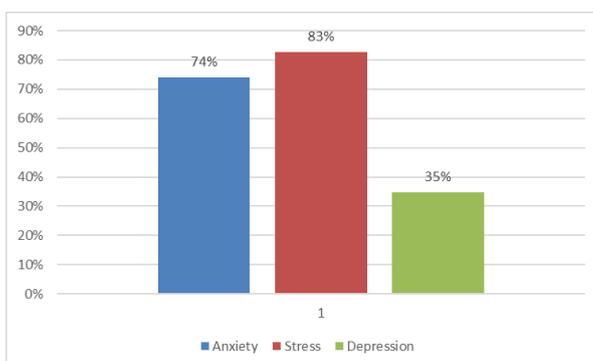
Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic around 73% of survey respondents admitted that they had been affected by poor mental health (35% of these had been affected significantly). This figure has risen over the course of the pandemic to 84%.

50% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that pupil behaviour affected their mental health.



*Just 5% of education workers work their contracted hours. This includes workers from all job roles and types apart from senior leadership.*

80% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that work has impacted on their mental health, and 64% of workers said that work pressures had made their mental health worse. Over the past 12 months, 84% of those surveyed had supported colleagues in the workplace in emotional distress at least once. Only 18% have a diagnosed mental health condition.

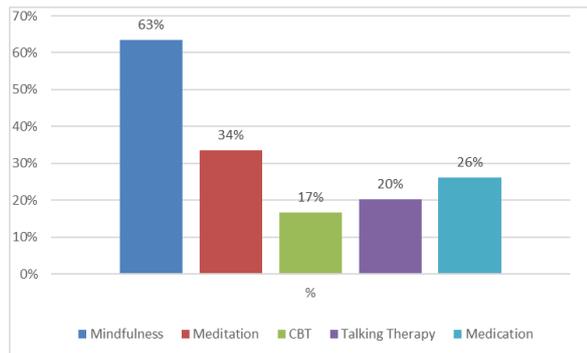


*A staggering 58% of respondents had experienced a mental health issue in the 12 months leading up to the survey with 38% contacting their GP, yet only 22% of respondents taking time off work due to poor mental health, with stress and anxiety being the leading cause.*

Even more worrying - 10% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that they had had suicidal thoughts related to their work.

## Mental Health Management

*Of those who responded to the question on techniques or activities that they had tried to help to manage their mental health, 63% had tried mindfulness. Other responses included exercise, counselling, prayer and self-help books, and podcasts.*



When asked what they believed could be done to help ease mental health issues in the workplace:

- 47% wanted increased parity between the way mental health and physical health are treated/perceived at work
- 39% wanted de-stigmatisation of mental health issues
- 41% wanted a designated quiet area at work
- 39% wanted a more open culture/environment and
- 36% wanted increased structure around the processes to deal with mental health issues

There were also calls for:

- A reduction in workload – working smarter and not harder with sensible hours
- Equal and fair treatment of staff – caring about employees and not just treating them like a number
- Bullying to be taken more seriously
- Addressing pupil behaviour.

38% of individuals would be most likely to ‘say nothing and carry on as normal’ if they were to suffer poor mental health symptoms. Another 12% of survey respondents said they had suffered from poor mental health yet had not taken any time off work.

## Employer Support

Support from employers is intermittent. Only 28% of survey respondents agree that their employers are supportive of mental health and only 16% said that their employer carried out wellbeing surveys. Just 33% said that their employers are signposting to available supports.

Interestingly, over half the respondents did not know if their workplace had a mental health and wellbeing policy and a third are unaware of what workplace mental health support programmes, if any, exist.

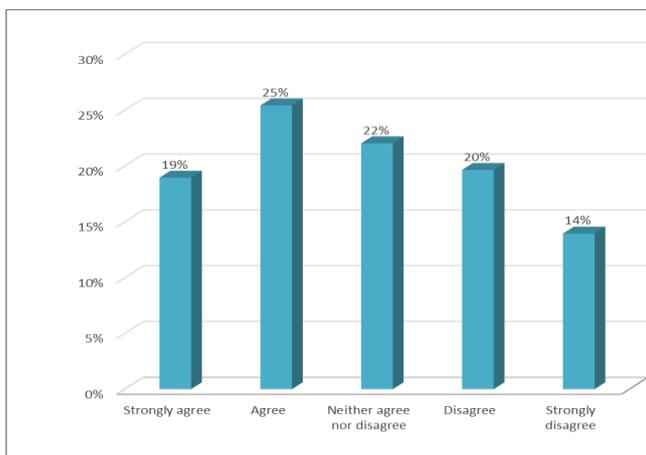
Mental health is, according to one third of respondents, regarded as a tick box exercise by colleagues and seen as a sign of weakness. Just under a third of survey respondents agreed/strongly agreed that poor mental health had prevented them from progressing at work and few workers (15%) would talk to a senior manager or HR for support regarding poor mental health.

For those returning to work following absence due to poor mental health, there is very little support with less than a quarter feeling their return to work had been well handled. Many were overwhelmed by the amount of work they had returned to and were made to feel as if they had let others down.

A small number of employers (according to 19% of survey responses) are working with staff to reduce workload and to develop staff health and wellbeing programmes (including flexible working).

## Conclusion

Whilst it must be recognised that supporting mental health and wellbeing in the workplace is important in building resilience in our education workforce, we cannot assume that this alone will cure the mental health crisis in the sector.



*44% of survey respondents (50% of classroom teachers) are seriously considering leaving the sector, with a further 22% thinking of doing so.*

Tackling the core issues and causes of mental health problems is vital in battling the crisis. Excessive workload, workplace culture, stigma, and pupil behaviour are key areas which need to be addressed if we are to stem the flow of workers leaving the sector.

NEU Cymru's mental health and wellbeing campaign will aim to address the findings of this survey in its upcoming priority campaign to improve the wellbeing of our education workforce in Wales.

## NEU Cymru Mental Health & Wellbeing Survey 2023

Following on from the survey we conducted in July 2021, NEU Cymru ran a follow-up survey two years on in July 2023.

The most recent survey, which attracted over 2,000 responses from workers across all job roles in schools, colleges and universities across Wales, continues to highlight the strength of feeling amongst our education sector workforce on the impact of work-related issues on mental health and wellbeing.

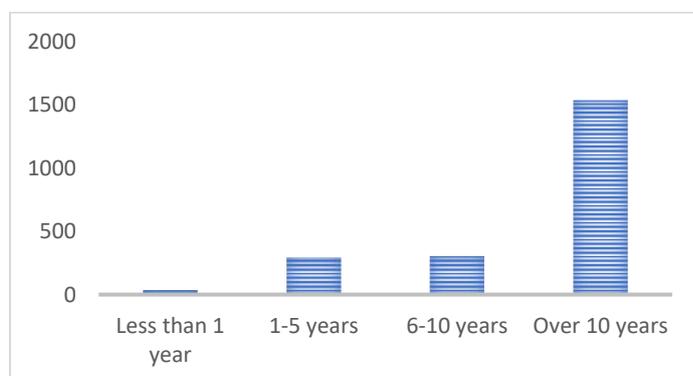
### Key Findings

The main findings from the survey indicate that:

- Excessive workload continues to be the leading cause of workplace stress and mental health issues. *92% of respondents regularly work over their contracted hours – most feeling pressured to do so - with only 9% feeling that their workload is fully manageable. 73% of respondents said their workload had actually increased over the past 12 months.*
- Despite efforts to implement the Welsh Government framework on the Whole School Approach to Wellbeing, negative workplace cultures persist in over a third of all workplaces. *27% of survey respondents feel they never have a voice or feel heard or listened to and over a third have witnessed unacceptable behaviours including bullying and emotional and verbal abuse.*
- Support for workers experiencing poor mental health is sporadic at best. Only 28% of respondents said their workplace had a wellbeing policy and *almost a fifth of those surveyed had unsupportive line managers.*

### Survey Overview

Individuals from across all local authorities in Wales took part in the survey, their education settings ranging from nurseries to universities. All age groups were represented with almost two thirds of responses from individuals aged between 35 and 54 and, of those, 82% of the responses were from women.



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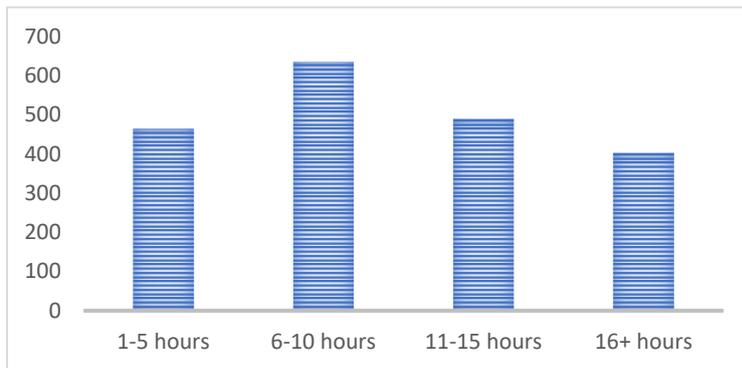
*70% of respondents have been working in the education sector for over 10 years.*

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## Factors Affecting Mental Health & Wellbeing

### DEMANDS

In an ideal world, all workers should feel capable of handling the demands of their role. They should have achievable tasks within their contracted hours, and they should feel comfortable voicing concerns about their role, work, and environment, with the assurance that their concerns will be heard and addressed.



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*The majority of survey respondents work more than their contracted hours.*

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Almost all survey respondents feel that their workload is impacting negatively on their emotional health and wellbeing. 43% of feel pressured to work additional hours and that their workload is unmanageable with deadlines that are neither realistic nor achievable. 73% of people said that their workload has increased during the past 12 months.

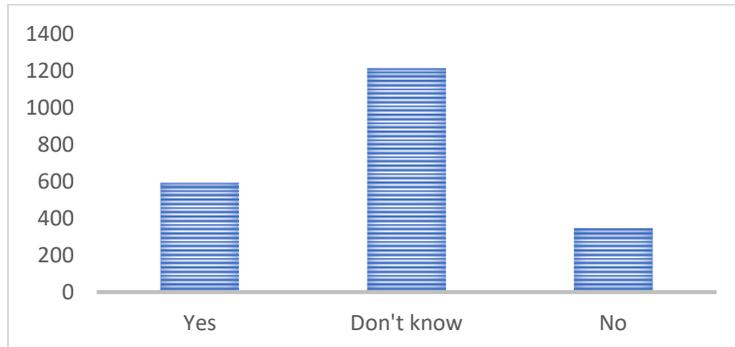
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*"It is simply assumed you will get everything done because we all do. Sadly, we do it at night!"*

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## ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Maintaining a healthy workplace improves productivity, employee retention, and overall mental wellbeing. It involves collaboration among workers, managers, and wellbeing teams to enhance the health, safety, and wellbeing of all employees.



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*Over half of survey respondents don't know if there is a wellbeing policy in their workplace.*

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Only 14% of workers believe their workplace is committed to employee health and wellbeing. Almost two thirds of those surveyed state they are never included in discussions around physical and verbal abuse in the workplace and nearly half of all respondents were not given opportunities to attend training related to dealing with difficult or challenging behaviours. As a result, stress and anxiety levels are higher and many individuals feel threatened, powerless, and less able to self-regulate their emotions.

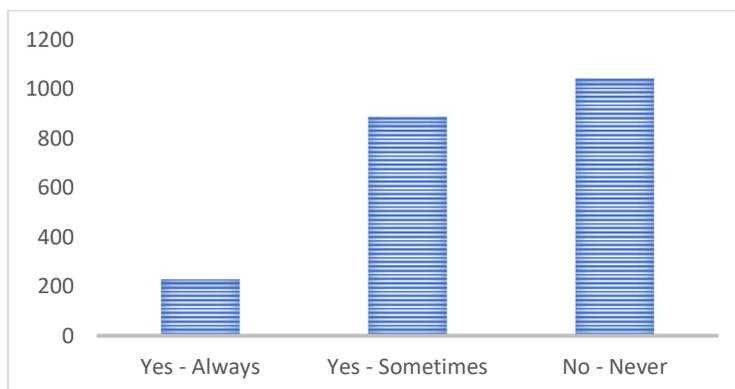
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*"Stress levels and wellbeing are occasionally acknowledged but no actual changes are ever implemented. The rigours of inspections always outweigh the need to make working conditions better for teachers."*

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## CONTROL

Ensuring a sense of control in our roles involves being consulted and involved in the organisation and execution of our work. This includes having the opportunity to be included in new projects or tasks, where we are empowered to utilise our skills, abilities, and experience.



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*Almost half of survey respondents are never given opportunities to contribute to the reviewing of policies and procedures.*

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45% of workers are never involved in decisions about their work, a quarter of respondents are never given any say in how they undertake their work and fewer than 20% are encouraged to upskill or contribute to activities outside their role.

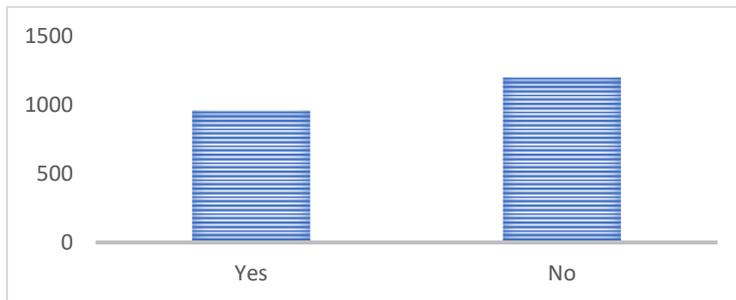
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*"We are often not included in the process and just told what we need to do."*

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## SKILLS & ABILITIES

Maintaining up-to-date skills is crucial for adapting to evolving workplace requirements. It also prepares individuals for potential new opportunities within the workplace.



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*Training and developments are not considered or reviewed regularly for 56% of survey respondents.*

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Less than a quarter of those surveyed are given regular opportunities by their employer to attend training.

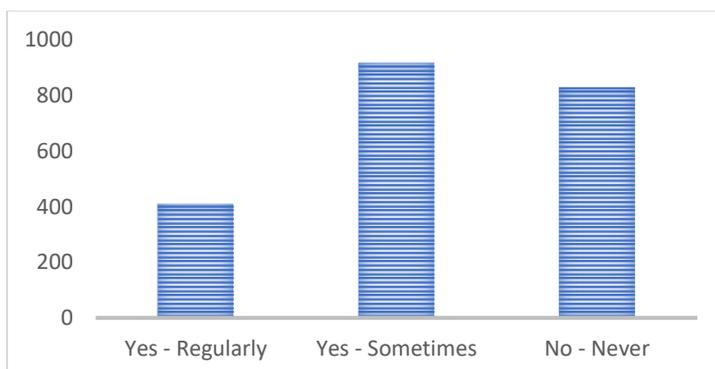
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*“Availability of courses has diminished due to a lack of funding and school budget restrictions. Money is not available to cover supply costs. We have to demonstrate professional development, but this has to be done in our own time and/or at our own expense.”*

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## SUPPORT

Feeling supported at work entails having access to timely information and assistance from colleagues and managers. Understanding the available internal and external support, and knowing how to access it, is beneficial for everyone.



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*Less than one fifth of workers have regular 1-2-1 meetings with their line managers to talk about emerging issues or pressures.*

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Generally, most respondents feel that they are respected by their colleagues and that their colleagues are supportive. Line managers are also generally supportive, and feedback is provided in a supportive manner.

Only 9% of employers regularly encourage and provide opportunities for workers to engage in healthy behaviours such as being physically active, eating healthy and wellbeing activities. Over half of employers offer no opportunities whatsoever.

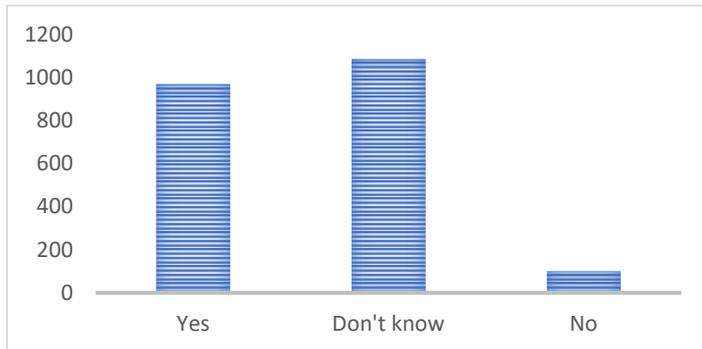
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*“I’d rather a certain situation get sorted out properly than being offered ‘support’ from a call centre when things reach crisis point.”*

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## RELATIONSHIPS

Positive work relationships are crucial to avoid experiences of bullying or harassment. It is important to recognise how our organisation promotes positive behaviours and familiarise ourselves with the policies in place to prevent or address such issues.



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*Only 45% of workplaces have written policies for dealing with unacceptable behaviour, including procedures for reporting such issues.*

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The main behaviours witnessed in the workplace include...

- Bullying and harassment
- Emotional abuse
- Verbal abuse
- Victimisation

Other behaviours include physical abuse, sexual abuse, and malicious gossip.

A third of respondents do not feel that honest, open communication is encouraged in their workplaces and many incidents of unacceptable behaviours go unreported.

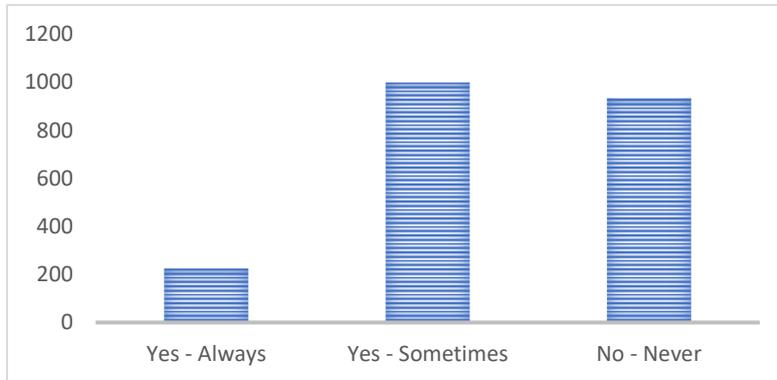
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*“Senior management are reluctant to tackle issues of bullying and inappropriate behaviour.”*

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## CHANGE

Organisational changes should be managed and communicated effectively, ensuring staff feel involved and engaged. They should be consulted, given opportunities to influence plans, and informed about potential job and work-related implications.



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*Only 10% of workers feel they are fully consulted with appropriately when changes are made which affect their work.*

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A third of survey respondents are unclear on how changes made will work in practice and how those changes will affect them.

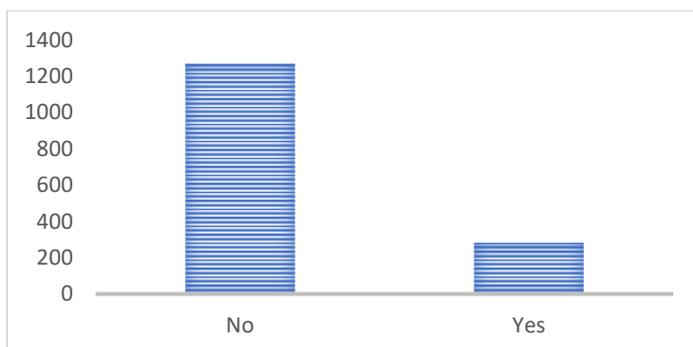
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*"In terms of organisational change, I don't have a say in this and am always told at the last minute."*

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## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Over the 12 months leading up to the survey, 25% of survey respondents had taken time off work due to poor mental health. The main reasons given for their absences were due to stress, anxiety and/or depression, with a third citing work related issues and another third citing personal and work-related issues as the reason.



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*A staggering 18% (282 individuals) admitted to having had suicidal thoughts in relation to their poor mental health.*

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27% of those who had taken time off had visited their GPs. Approximately 12% of those had been referred to Occupational Health and/or had been referred for counselling or other services. 42 individuals accessed the Employee Assistance Programme.

## JUST ONE STORY

Hearing first-hand from the survey respondents about their experiences is a key motivator to push for change. This is just one of 294 experiences that have been shared with us...

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*"I have experienced bullying by my Head teacher over many years until I had the courage to report what was happening, by which time my mental and physical health were impacted. I was ostracised by some staff members but supported by others. It led to me being overlooked for promotions in school and be constantly observed which eventually led to me being off work with stress and anxiety. I had counselling arranged by Occupational Health at my request. If it wasn't for the support of my Union I would never have gone back into teaching as I felt so worthless and questioned my ability as a teacher. It has had a lasting impact on my wellbeing. I am now actively involved in staff wellbeing and feel issues such as this should be handled by professionals and not employees of the local authority."*

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## CONCLUSION

The NEU Cymru Mental Health & Wellbeing Survey 2023, based on responses from over 2,000 education sector workers in Wales, reveals persistent challenges.

Excessive workload remains a primary source of stress, with 92% working beyond contracted hours. Negative workplace cultures endure, impacting voices and leading to unacceptable behaviours like bullying. And lack of control in key decisions that impact on working practices and workload underscores the need for organisational changes, effective communication, and comprehensive support to address these issues and promote mental wellbeing in our education settings.