

What is burnout?

Burnout is a state of emotional and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It is an occupational phenomenon which results from **chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed**. While stress is often temporary and some can be healthy, prolonged periods of stress can be debilitating and lead to burnout.

Common signs and symptoms of burnout

Burnout is characterized by:

- feelings of **energy depletion or exhaustion**,
- **apathy or feelings of cynicism** towards one's job; and
- **reduced performance** at work.

Other symptoms include: Irritability, anger, lack of motivation and procrastination, decreased sense of accomplishment, inconsistent sleep habits, and other frequent health problems like headaches and colds. (ASANA)

Top contributors to burnout

1. Being asked to take on more work
2. Toxic workplace culture
3. Being asked to complete work faster
4. Being micromanaged
5. Lack of control (e.g., inability to influence your schedule, assignments, workload, etc.)

Source: Visier, 2021

Burnout is increasing

A 2021 Visier survey of over 1,000 US employees concludes that burnout is an epidemic which **disproportionately impacts younger and female employees**. 42% of women vs. 35% of men report they have been often or almost always burned out in 2021. (McKinsey 2021)

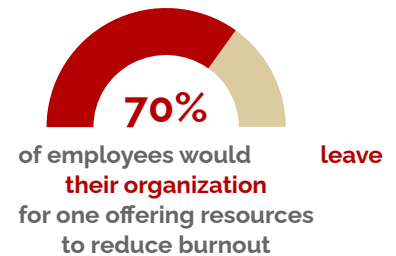
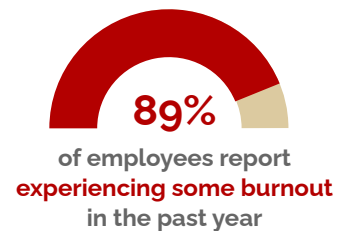
42% of women felt **uncomfortable talking to their boss** about burnout compared to 30% of men (Visier). The top two reasons cited by both men and women were:

- Fear of being seen as incapable of doing my job
- There's no point / nothing will change.



Job stress is estimated to cost American companies **more than \$300 billion a year** in health costs, absenteeism and poor performance.

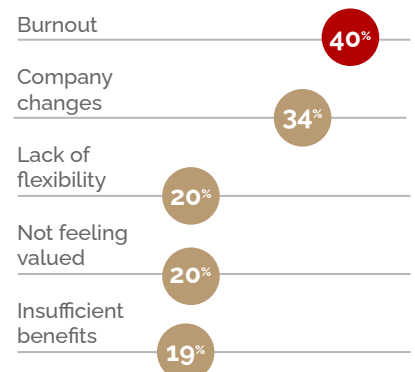
Source: UMass Lowell



Source: Visier, 2021

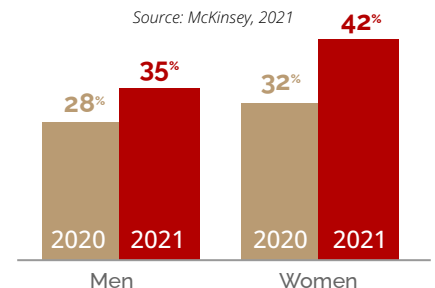
Among U.S. workers who started a new job in 2021, burnout was cited as the **top reason for leaving their previous role**

Source: Limeade, 2021



Both men and women reported **higher rates in 2021** of feeling often or almost always burned out

Source: McKinsey, 2021



Managing Burnout

The **Demand-Control-Support** (DCS) model, developed by workplace stress researcher Robert Karasek, outlines the **interplay** between stress and job demands, control over one's work, and social connection in the workplace. Leiter & Maslach's **Areas of Worklife** model expands on this and identifies six key areas where imbalances can lead to burnout. These models can be used to address burnout at the individual, team and organizational levels.



DEMAND
reduce job demands



CONTROL
increase employee autonomy and control



SUPPORT
increase support from co-workers and supervisors

What INDIVIDUALS can do...

- **Recognize signs of burnout.** Understand the difference between stress and burnout and assess imbalances that may be leading to burnout.
- **Create boundaries, utilize benefits and resources.** Take full advantage of vacation and paid time off to disconnect and disengage from work. Limit digital overload and use company resources aimed at reducing burnout.
- **Openly communicate with your supervisor.** Clarify expectations to ensure a manageable workload and address any challenges you may be facing.
- **Practice self-care, cultivate social connections.** Attend to physical well-being, engage in mindfulness and other skill-building, and seek social connections both at work and away from work.

What MANAGERS can do...

- **Ask your team.** Make time for 1:1 meetings and explicitly ask about overwork and burnout. Engage in active listening.
- **Clarify job scope and prioritize impact.** Some roles may have been susceptible to scope creep during the pandemic. Agree on current responsibilities and encourage team members to decline or delegate low-impact meetings and work in favor of priority projects.
- **Share context and celebrate achievements.** Ensure team members know how their work relates to team and company goals and recognize their contributions and hard work. A sense of purpose and achievement will increase engagement and help prioritize work.
- **Lead by example.** Model work/life balance by declining additional work, taking time off, and sending messages and requests inside normal working hours.

What ORGANIZATIONS can do...

- **Train and educate.** Equip managers and employees to identify, prevent and alleviate burnout. Provide validated assessments and skill-building tools.
- **Support employee autonomy.** Offer employees control over their work through flexible work models, to the extent possible.
- **Enable community-building.** Support a psychologically safe work environment by providing ongoing opportunities for employees to connect and come together as a community.
- **Encourage healthy work-life boundaries.** Set company-wide no-meeting days, discourage the "always on" mentality, and help reduce digital exhaustion.
- **Create more recovery time.** Make rest and down time culturally acceptable. Consider global days or weeks of rest and offer comprehensive behavioral health benefits.

Assessing imbalances in six key areas can help identify burnout

Workload: Extent to which your workload is manageable.

Control: Degree of control you have over your work.

Reward: Feeling appropriately rewarded for your work.

Community: Quality of social support at work.

Fairness: Perceptions of fair and equitable treatment at work.

Values: Extent to which your work matches your personal values.

Source: Areas of Worklife Scale (AWS)

Top rated benefits to help manage burnout:



Source: Visier, 2021

Useful resources

- Mental Health in the Post-Pandemic Workplace (BCCWF, 2021)
- Reversing Burnout (SSIR, 2005)
- Assessing Burnout: Maslach Burnout Toolkit
- *Modern Health* Employer Playbook: Taking Care of Burnout
- Don't Let Returning to the Office Burn Out Your Team (HBR, 2021)