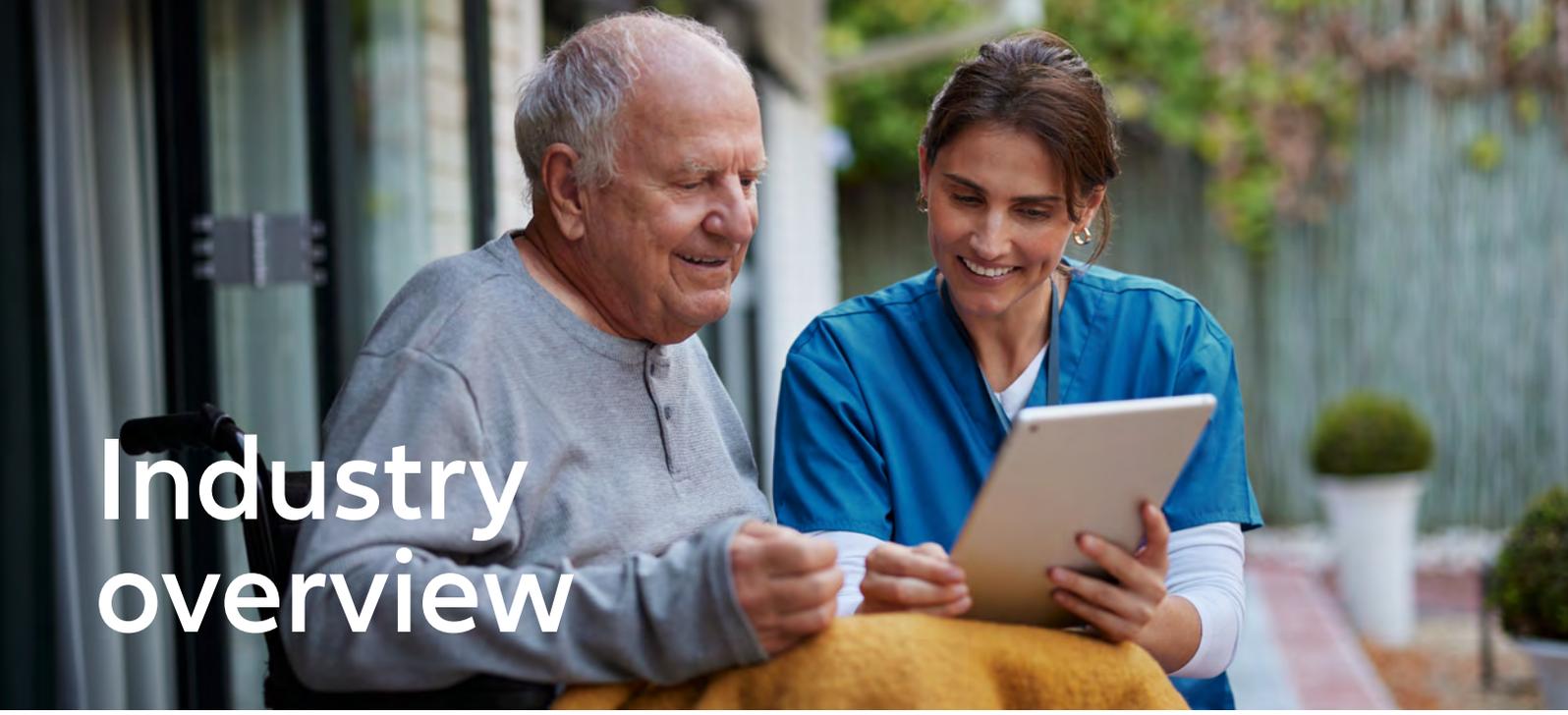




Unschedule the Burnout

A practical guide for the healthcare sector



Industry overview

Almost a fifth of all surveyed healthcare workers (19 per cent) feel burnt out¹, and 43 per cent report they can't take proper breaks due to their back-to-back schedule².

Healthcare needs to lead by example on mentally healthy work because the sector is built on caring for others. If the workforce itself is struggling, the quality of care and patient safety can be compromised. However, stigma and workforce shortages keep many workers from seeking help early enough.

Fear of repercussions and unclear reporting obligations mean clinicians often 'push through' in silence. Amenities and recovery opportunities have diminished over time, compounding risk.

"We need systemic change, but teams can act now: daily huddles, debriefs and a culture where mental health days are acceptable. Make help confidential and non-punitive, and train managers to spot early warning signs."



Dr Mark Cross
Consultant Psychiatrist

A snapshot of burnout in healthcare



Mental stress and/or work pressure accounted for over 28 per cent of all FY25 psychological claims in the healthcare sector.³



The average days taken off work when a healthcare worker claims for psychological injury is 70, significantly more than those with physical claims.⁴



Nearly two in four (36 per cent) surveyed healthcare workers feel a lack of team resource/ staff shortages negatively impact their job satisfaction.⁵



39 per cent of surveyed healthcare workers cite a lack of recognition as negatively impacting their feelings about work.⁶



Allianz has seen a relative increase of over 25% in psychological claims in the healthcare sector since 2021.⁷



Tips for the healthcare sector

For workers in the healthcare sector, relentless patient demands, chronic understaffing, and the emotional weight of life-and-death decisions are driving widespread exhaustion and burnout.

Using Allianz's research-informed **Beyond Burnout framework**, we collaborated with Dr Mark Cross, to share practical tips and strategies to help mitigate the experience of burnout and promote employee wellbeing and productivity.

Dr Mark Cross is a consultant psychiatrist with over 30 years of clinical experience, known for his work on the ABC series *Changing Minds* and his advocacy for reform in Australia's mental health system. His deep understanding of the emotional and systemic pressures facing healthcare workers drives his commitment to burnout prevention and staff wellbeing, which he sees as essential to improving outcomes for both patients and practitioners.

"I say to people, 'Yes, your work is so important to you, but no job is worth your family life disintegrating, and/or you becoming a risk to yourself.'"

Dr Mark Cross



Nearly one in five (19 per cent) surveyed healthcare workers say they often make mistakes at work due to feeling exhausted or burnt out.⁸



Nearly a quarter say they feel emotionally exhausted.⁹



Over half (51 per cent) say their organisation frequently experiences staff shortages due to absenteeism.¹⁰



Creating a just workplace

A fair and equitable workplace fosters a sense of value and respect among employees and reduces feelings of injustice.

Healthcare workers are known to be quite resilient; but resilience has its limits. Dr Mark Cross compares this to an elastic band which can be stretched multiple times but goes back to its original shape. However, after a while of stretching, it can break.

Workers are also prone to experiencing compassion fatigue, which describes the emotional depletion from constant caregiving, and not allowing space to look after self. Which can worsen the compassion fatigue and affect quality of care.

Tip: Provide clear career pathways and professional development opportunities. Offer training programs, mentorship opportunities, and support for continuing education to help employees progress in their careers and feel valued for their contributions.

Tip: Implement recognition programs to celebrate the achievements and contributions of healthcare workers. This can include internal awards, staff appreciation platforms, or public acknowledgements of outstanding work. Recognising employees' efforts helps them feel valued and appreciated.



Managing workload and work pressure

Ensuring manageable workloads and reasonable time pressure prevents employees from becoming overwhelmed and exhausted.

While absenteeism impacts healthcare workers on the ground, it's also the effects of presenteeism that are leading to burnout. This means physically being at work whilst mentally checking out, which can impact job performance.

Tip: Implement scheduling practices that provide predictability and minimise last-minute changes, to ensure that employees can commit to a regular routine of personal and recovery activities outside of work. Use scheduling software to optimise shift rotations and ensure that employees have sufficient time off between shifts to rest and recover.

Tip: Support healthcare workers to prioritise tasks based on urgency and importance by providing decision making tools or clear processes to assist with task prioritisation.



Effective workplace communication and support

Clear and open communication builds trust and collaboration, reducing misunderstandings and conflicts that can increase stress levels.

A supportive workplace culture and environment provides resources and emotional support, reducing feelings of isolation and promoting resilience.

Tip: Integrate recovery into daily routines: short huddles, regular debriefs, and flexible rostering - can help staff decompress and maintain wellbeing in high-pressure environments. These practices make recovery part of the workflow, not an afterthought.

Tip: Implement 'leadership rounding' where senior managers and decision makers regularly connect with frontline staff to listen to concerns and provide immediate support or resources when possible.

Tip: Acknowledge the need for breaks and reflection after difficult moments: in healthcare, the pace can make it tempting to move straight from a challenging or traumatic incident back into routine tasks - but this can take a toll over time. Encourage teams to pause, share how the experience impacted them, and reset before continuing with their day. Creating space for these conversations helps normalise emotional responses, reduces stigma, and supports long-term resilience.



Promoting autonomy

Empowering employees with autonomy promotes a sense of control and ownership, thus reducing frustration and disengagement that can lead to burnout.

Tip: Establish unit-based 'practice councils' where frontline staff can develop and implement solutions to workplace challenges (with guardrails in place) allowing greater flexibility in how procedures and compliance requirements are implemented at a unit level. This provides teams with the opportunity to influence operations from a bottom up perspective rather than interventions consistently being applied from a top down approach.

Tip: Make mental health breaks practical and free of stigma: normalise the use of mental health days without requiring a doctor's certificate or excessive paperwork, and ensure leaders communicate that taking time out for wellbeing is both acceptable and encouraged. This approach helps remove barriers and sends a clear message that mental health is treated with the same importance as physical health.

Further information is available in our [Beyond Burnout – a holistic guide to workplace wellbeing in the workplace](#).

This is a comprehensive evidence-informed guide for employers and employees to support the prevention, and necessary intervention, of burnout in the workplace.

About the research

The research was commissioned by Allianz and conducted by YouGov in accordance with the Australian Polling Council standard. The 2025 survey comprises a nationally representative sample of 1,642 employees (middle managers and below) and 506 managers (senior managers and above) aged 18+ across Australia.

Fieldwork was conducted online between 28 July and 7 August 2025. Following interviewing, data were weighted by age, gender and region to reflect the latest ABS population estimates. Professional services, construction, education and healthcare cohorts were upweighted for analysis.

Allianz Workers' Compensation claims data for Financial Years 2021 to 2025 and across all Allianz portfolios including; Allianz Australia's Underwritten Workers' Compensation, NSW Managed Fund (for both private and public sector employees) and Victorian Managed Fund Portfolios.

- ¹ 19% of surveyed employees in the healthcare sector reported feeling burnt out, when asked about how they feel about their job.
- ² 43% of surveyed employees in the healthcare sector reported not being able to take proper breaks due to their back-to-back schedule, when asked about their current work environment.
- ³ According to Allianz Workers' Compensation data, in FY25 Mental Stress and/or Work Pressure accounted for 28.3% of all Allianz Primary Active Psychological claims in the health sector.
- ⁴ According to Allianz Workers' Compensation data, in FY25 the average days off work for a Allianz Primary Active Psychological Claim in the health sector was 70 days. This was significantly more days off than those with a physical claim (45 days).
- ⁵ 36% of surveyed employees in the healthcare sector identified staff shortages as being a contributing factor to feeling negatively about their job.
- ⁶ 39% of surveyed employees in the healthcare sector identified lack of recognition as being a contributing factor to feeling negatively about their job.
- ⁷ According to Allianz Workers' Compensation data, Primary Active Psych Claims in the Health sector have seen a relative increase of 26.35% since 2021.
- ⁸ 19% of surveyed employees in the healthcare sector agree that they often make mistakes at work due to feeling exhausted or burnt out.
- ⁹ 23% of surveyed employees in the healthcare sector stated they feel emotionally exhausted, when asked how they feel about their job.
- ¹⁰ 51% of surveyed employees in the healthcare sector agree that they frequently experience staff shortages due to absenteeism (i.e. staff off due to illness, stress, mental health, etc.).