PARIO PARTNERS

The Resilience Equation:
A Briefing on Burnout and Retention

Executive Summary

Health and social care organisations are under growing strain from workforce fatigue, moral stress, and leadership pressure. This report captures the views of one hundred and forty frontline professionals and highlights the underlying factors driving disengagement, burnout, and turnover.

The findings show that while personal resilience remains high, formal support is underutilised, and trust in leadership is inconsistent. Staff want leaders who are present, responsive, and capable of supporting teams in real time.

The strategic response requires more than policy—it calls for clear visibility on workforce risk, and leadership appointments that prioritise behaviours proven to drive trust, retention, and performance.

Organisations that act now—by strengthening leadership and building cultures that reflect the realities of the health and social care sector—will be best placed to retain staff and deliver sustainable outcomes.

About this Report

Burnout and fatigue are not theoretical risks; they are current and active threats to workforce stability and organisational performance.

Pario Partners conducted this study to examine the realities being faced by today's health and social care workforce.

Based on survey responses from individuals across nursing, support, and management roles, this report explores four critical themes: resilience, burnout, ethical tension, and leadership support.

It is designed to help CEOs, HR Directors, and workforce leaders uncover the root causes of disengagement, attrition, and moral stress—offering a clear, evidence-based strategy and a strong foundation to improve retention, restore morale, and build a more resilient workforce.

Methodology

Pario Partners conducted an online survey in May 2025, gathering responses from one hundred and forty professionals across the health and social care sector.

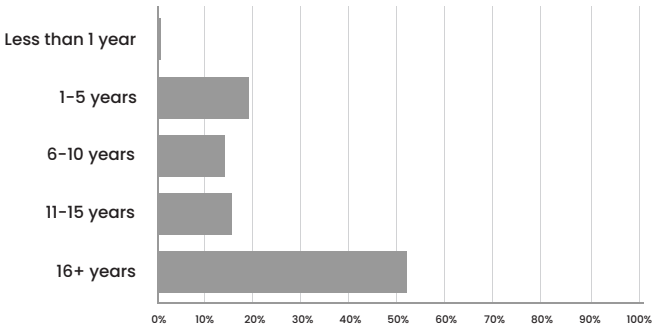
The sample included a broad cross-section of the workforce: registered nurses made up the largest group (thirty-nine percent), followed by healthcare support workers (thirty-two percent), and individuals in management roles (twelve percent)—bringing valuable leadership insight. The remaining responses came from allied health professionals and other frontline roles.

Participants completed a structured questionnaire using a five-point scale, multiple choice and free-text fields.

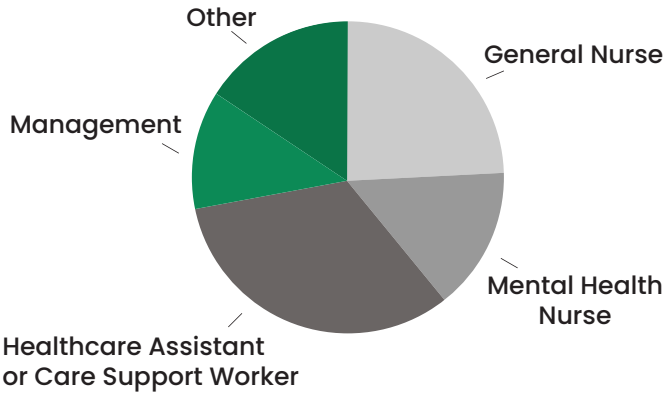
A mixed-methods approach is used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics were applied to identify trends and areas of consensus, while a thematic analysis of qualitative responses surfaced the key challenges and opportunities raised by staff.

Findings have been integrated throughout this report to offer sector leaders a grounded, data-informed foundation for strategic decision-making.

Experience in health & social care



Which of these best describes your role?

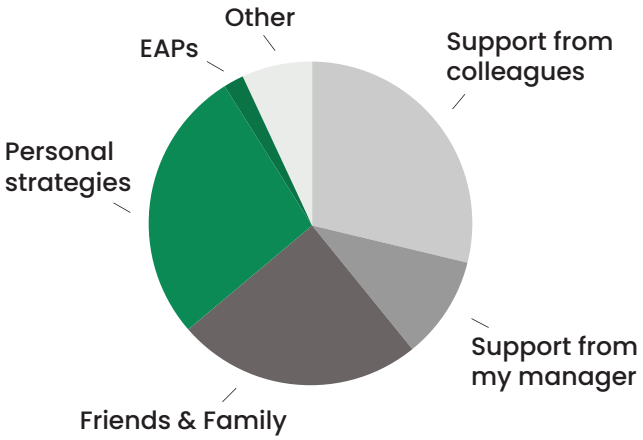


Personal Resilience

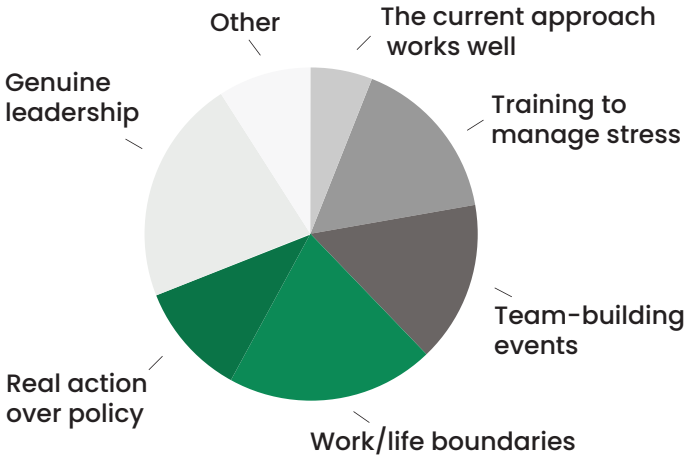
This first section explored staff resilience and the sources of support they rely on when managing challenging situations in the workplace.

There is encouraging news at the individual level: nearly three-quarters (seventy-two percent) of respondents reported being able to recover emotionally after a challenging incident. However, the data shows that this resilience is largely self-sustained, not system-enabled.

How do you cope with difficult situations at work?



How to improve staff resilience



Over eighty percent of participants said they rely on colleagues, family, or personal coping strategies. Just two percent named employee assistance programmes (EAPs) as their primary source of support. While this may not be surprising, it highlights a disconnect between policy and frontline reality—particularly as many organisations continue to invest in and promote EAPs as a central pillar of wellbeing provision.

Formal support is not rejected, but these initiatives are not prioritised. Staff consistently look elsewhere for support, especially to peer relationships and informal networks.

When asked what would improve resilience, the dominant theme was leadership. Participants cited inconsistent and ineffective management as a core driver of stress. Many want to see a shift toward leadership that is present, empathetic, and supportive in the moments that matter.

Without visible, values-led leadership, resilience remains fragile, and attrition risk remains high.

Strategic Response:

Successful organisations prioritise leadership capability—not tenure—when promoting staff. In recruitment, they assess behaviours and values alongside experience, recognising that leadership style is critical to operational performance. Leaders who demonstrate transformational leadership—those who inspire, support, and engage their teams—consistently drive higher retention, stronger morale, and better outcomes across the organisation.

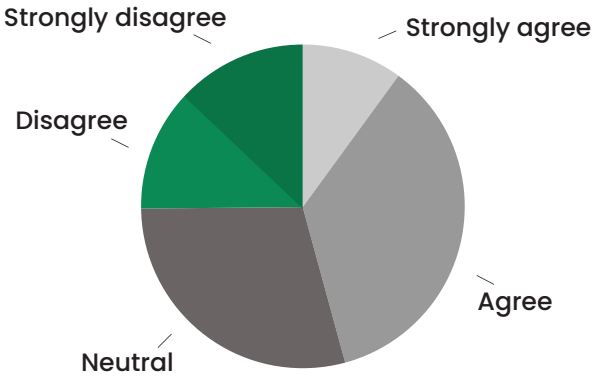
Our leadership and executive recruitment services employ psychometric assessments that provide employers with clear information on candidates' leadership style. This supports structured interview design, helping organisations identify individuals who can lead with impact and align with their values.

Moral and Ethical Tension

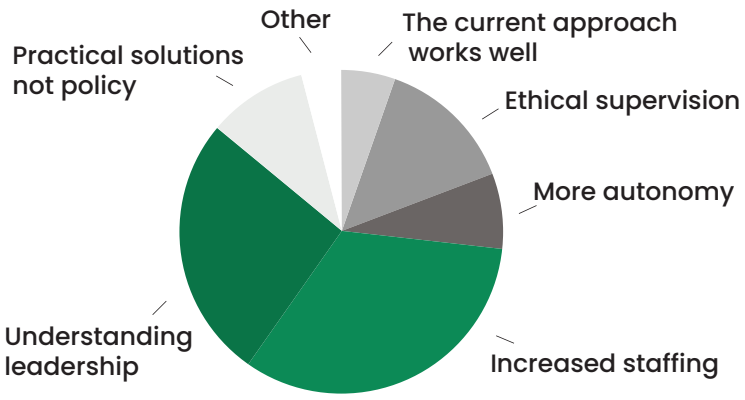
Here we asked participants questions relating to the ethical challenges they face at work.

Eighty-three percent of respondents said they had experienced situations that challenged their values—with nearly half strongly agreeing. Only one person strongly disagreed. This confirms that moral and ethical tension is routine in health and social care.

My workplace supports staff facing ethical challenges



How to reduce moral and ethical tension



The survey indicates no single cause of moral stress—but the most frequently cited drivers were lack of resources (twenty-seven percent) and wider system pressures (twenty-three percent). This highlights a broader truth: much of the strain staff face is systemic, beyond the control of any one organisation. Yet employers are left to absorb the consequences and navigate the fallout as moral and ethical tension directly affects retention, and trust in the organisation.

When asked how moral distress could be reduced, the top response—by some margin—was increasing staffing levels (thirty-two percent). Resourcing pressures are well known, and many argue that current policy decisions are compounding the challenge. As a result, organisations are left managing the fallout without the levers to address the root causes directly.

Strategic Response:
While the structural causes of moral stress may be beyond an employer's direct control, the organisational response is not. How ethical challenges are managed—and whether pressure is absorbed or amplified—is largely shaped by internal culture, leadership, and systems. Organisations must understand the real demands placed on their staff and ensure resources—both practical and emotional—are proportionate.

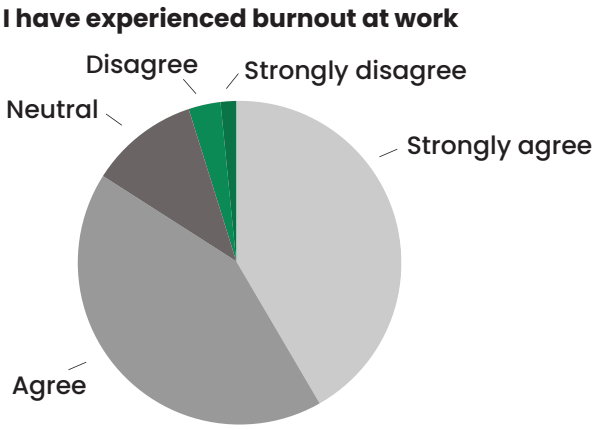
Our Retention Health Check is a targeted workforce risk assessment that gives leadership teams a clear view of pressure points within their organisation. Through confidential and anonymous staff engagement, we assess key risk factors and deliver an evidence-based report highlighting risks to retention and practical actions to address them.

Burnout and Fatigue

In this section, participants were asked about their experience of burnout, its causes, and whether they feel their organisation responds effectively.

Burnout is pervasive—eighty-five percent of respondents reported experiencing it in their role. The most cited driver was unmanageable workload (thirty-six percent), reinforcing the broader pattern of sector-wide pressure. Calls for increased staffing and funding accounted for nearly half of the responses.

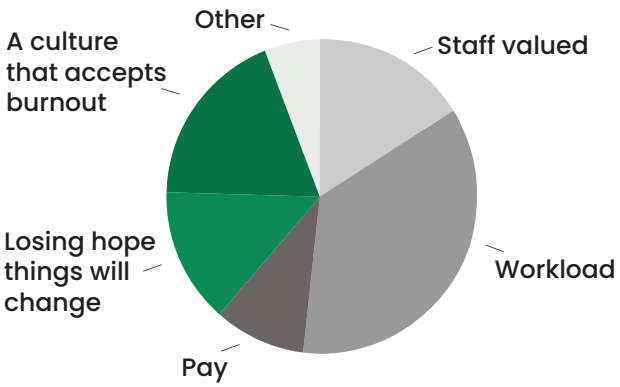
When asked whether their employer recognises and supports staff experiencing burnout, the response was mixed. Only nine percent strongly agreed their organisation does this well, and sixty-five percent did not agree their organisation responds effectively.



Participants did not converge on a single solution to burnout. Responses were spread across several areas: addressing staff shortages, leaders that understand the frontline, practical support to manage pressure and resources. Just nine percent selected access to wellbeing or mental health support—the workforce view is that structural strain needs to be fixed, and they are not drawn to EAPs as the answer.

Strategic Response:
The survey presents a strategic opportunity—organisations that invest in transformational leadership are more likely to maintain stability, retain key staff, and mitigate long-term performance risk.

Main cause of burnout



Appointing the right leaders is one of the most effective ways to reduce burnout risk, strengthen culture, and stabilise teams under pressure. Our Executive Search service is designed to appoint leaders who align with organisational values, strengthen culture, and sustain performance under pressure. When leadership is aligned with culture organisations are better able to retain talent, maintain morale, and deliver consistent performance, even in challenging conditions.

Leadership Support

This part of the survey explored how supported staff feel by their immediate and senior leaders—specifically whether leadership presence, empathy, and consistency are experienced in practice.

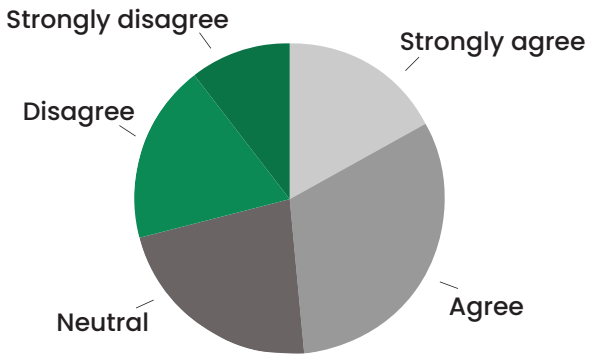
Over half (fifty-one percent) of respondents were neutral or negative when asked if they feel safe raising concerns with leadership. That number signals cultural risk.

The top issue cited as undermining trust in leadership (thirty percent) was that managers and leaders are too far removed from the frontline—pointing to a disconnect between strategic decision-makers and day-to-day realities. Staff feel their experiences are not always understood.

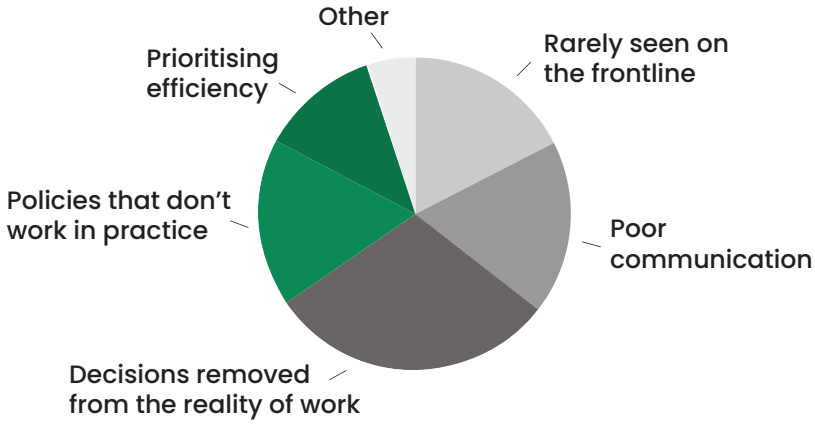
Still, there's a foundation to build on: forty percent of participants agreed their leadership demonstrates genuine commitment to staff, compared to thirty-three percent who disagreed.

When asked what most builds trust, the leading response (thirty percent) was the ability to speak up and be heard without fear. This highlights a practical opportunity—by appointing the right people to leadership roles and supporting them with targeted development, organisations can improve trust, stability, and performance from the inside out.

I feel able to give feedback to leadership



What undermines trust in leadership?



Strategic Response:
Trust in leadership is a critical factor in staff engagement and retention. This can be addressed without structural overhaul. Organisations that succeed in this space take deliberate steps to close the gap between leadership and the frontline. That means appointing managers with the right behavioural competencies, not just technical experience, and supporting them with targeted development.

Our Retention Health Check provides a clear, data-driven view of how leadership is experienced across your organisation, from the ability to raise concerns, to perceptions of trust, empathy, and consistency. With anonymous staff engagement, we investigate the leadership dynamics that are supporting—or undermining—retention and performance.

The Workforce Perspective

The survey concluded with a final question that invited participants to reflect on the survey themes and share, in their own words, what they believe would most improve staff resilience in health and social care.

Staffing and workload:
Responses centred on safe staffing levels, fairer rotas, and less pressure to absorb chronic shortfalls.

"Support from leadership on highly demanding roles. Practical solutions instead of words."

Visible, supportive leadership:
Managers who are present, empathetic, and actively engaged with frontline realities.

"Leadership having an improved understanding of the demands placed on frontline staff—and showing improved support with actions rather than words."

Psychological safety and voice:
Freedom to speak up, feeling heard, and able to raise concerns.

"The most important thing is being able to speak out and know that someone's listening—and doing something."

Recognition and value:
While pay came up often, many responses pointed to respect, appreciation, and fairness.

"Being valued and appreciated, not just rewarded on paper."

Real support, over policy promises:
There was clear fatigue around wellbeing rhetoric without tangible follow-through.

"We don't need new policies. We need leaders who act like they mean what they say."

From Data to Direction

This report highlights the strength and insight already present in the health and social care workforce. Staff are clear about what matters: supportive leadership, safe staffing, and the ability to be heard.

There is the opportunity to turn insight into impact. The organisations that take action—by investing in values-led leadership and acting on what staff are telling them—will be best placed to retain talent, reduce pressure, and deliver high-quality care.

At Pario Partners, we help health and care providers take the next step with confidence—through evidence-led recruitment, leadership insight, and practical workforce strategy.

Joseph Dumont, Director
Joseph has led the group for over twenty years and is an expert in strategy, process efficiency, and workforce research. He is a certified Lean Six Sigma Black Belt and studied Master's in Business Administration (MBA) at the University of York.

Clare Feasby, RN, Group Head of Quality
Clare is a recognised industry expert in workforce compliance and regulation. With extensive experience in both human resources and as a registered nurse, she has held senior management roles within the NHS, private healthcare, and as a CQC-registered manager in social care.

Pario Partners Ltd.

July 2025. All rights reserved.

PARIO PARTNERS

3 Coldbath Square, London EC1R 5HL

0208 154 7395 info@pariopartners.com

https://pariopartners.com