# Individual Conflict in the Workplace

Definition: *"Conflict may be expressed formally as disciplinary action or employee grievances but also by disagreements and clashes between colleagues and between managers and their staff."*

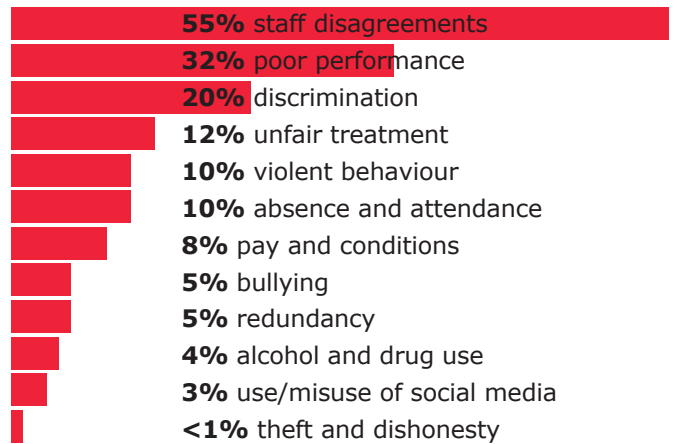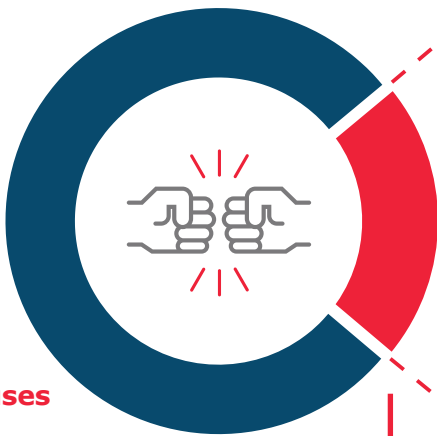**Managers with responsibility for HR and workplace relations said that...**

Overall, organisational conflict is
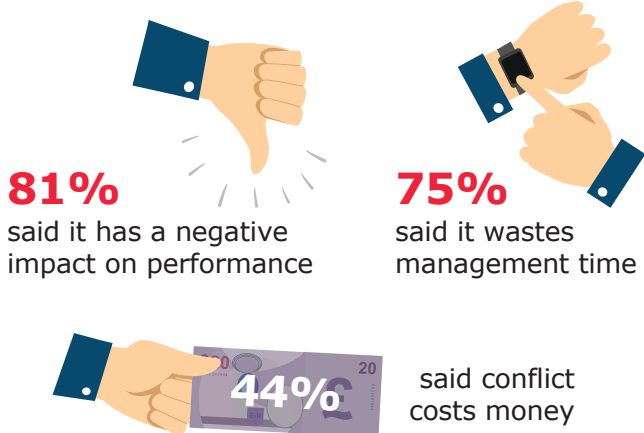
Rare - 92%

5% – Occasional

3% – Common*
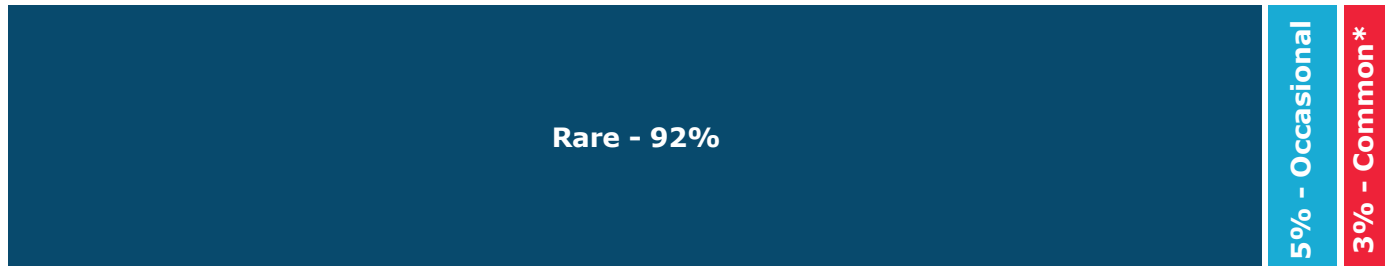
*(reported only by large organisations)

Nevertheless, conflict remains a feature for many

**22%** of businesses said they have experienced conflict in the past 12 months, **with a range of causes**

- **55%** staff disagreements
- **32%** poor performance
- **20%** discrimination
- **12%** unfair treatment
- **10%** violent behaviour
- **10%** absence and attendance
- **8%** pay and conditions
- **5%** bullying
- **5%** redundancy
- **4%** alcohol and drug use
- **3%** use/misuse of social media
- **<1%** theft and dishonesty

When conflict occurs, what is its impact?

81% said it has a negative impact on performance

75% said it wastes management time

44% said conflict costs money

So, is managing conflict a priority?

Fewer small businesses agreed that managing conflict was a priority than medium and large organisations

61% Small businesses said it was a priority

78% Medium and large businesses said it was a priority
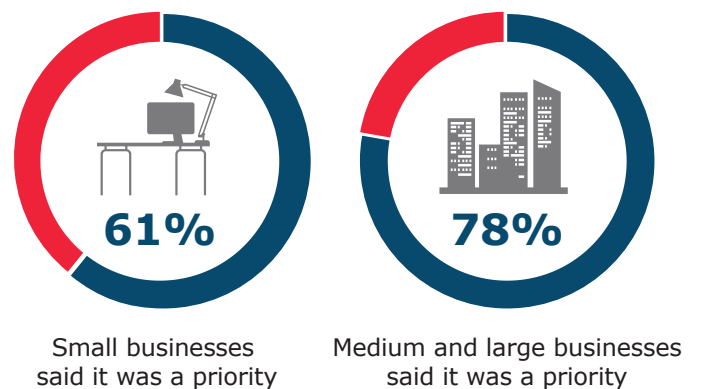
Who manages conflict?

87% of small organisations use **line managers** to manage conflict

77% of medium sized organisations use **line managers** to manage conflict

(Most large organisations use HR to manage conflict)

The role played by line managers

Line managers...

- *"have the skills and confidence to address and resolve conflict in their teams"*
- *"are encouraged to resolve conflict at the earliest possible point through informal discussion"*

83% AGREED TO BOTH STATEMENTS

But are line managers given training in conflict management skills?

52% of **all** organisations offer some conflict management skills training

100% large organisations offer training

73% medium organisations offer training

51% small organisations offer training

So, smaller organisations are more likely than larger ones to use line managers to manage conflict ... but are less likely to see it as a priority and offer training in the necessary skills

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Findings from the BDRC Business Opinion Omnibus of 500 UK businesses in March 2016.
Interviews with those who had responsibility for HR/employee benefits and excluded sole traders (n=239) Although the poll is weighted to the UK business population, actual numbers for large organisations are small and findings must be interpreted with that in mind.

1)   Would you say that in your organisation conflict is: very rare, occasional, common, very common

2)   Which of the following have been the main issues that have led to such conflict in your organization
        in the last 12 months:

a.   Pay, terms and conditions
b.   The management of absence of attendance
c.   Attempts to address poor performance of staff
d.   Theft and dishonesty
e.   Abusive or violent behavior
f.   Alcohol or drug use
g.   Use or misuse of social media
h.   Personal disagreements between staff
i.   Discrimination
j.   Accusations of unfair treatment against line and other managers
k.   Bullying and harassment from colleagues
l.   Redundancy
m.   Other
n.   Don't know
o.   None of these

3)   Thinking about conflict in your organization, how much do you agree or
        disagree with the following statements:

a.   Conflict has a negative impact on performance
b.   Conflict wastes a significant amount of management time
c.   The cost of conflict is a concern
d.   Managing conflict is an important priority for this organization

4)   When conflict occurs, who normally manages this in your organization? Is it

a.   Line Manager
b.   Specialist HR Manager
c.   External HR consultant
d.   Legal adviser
e.   General Manager
f.   Other (specify)

5)   Thinking about the role played by line managers in your organization,
        how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

a.   Managers are encouraged to resolve conflict at the earliest possible point through informal discussion
b.   Managers have the skills and confidence to address and resolve conflict in their teams

6)   In your organisation, are line manager provided with formal training in any of the following areas?

a.   Employment Law
b.   Using disciplinary and grievance procedures
c.   Dealing with bullying in the workplace
d.   Managing poor attendance in the workplace
e.   Managing poor performance
f.   Having difficult conversations
g.   Tackling unwanted behaviours e.g. misuse of social media
h.   Mentoring and /or coaching staff
i.   None of these

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