Email Services Outage Survey Report

How employees reacted, communicated, and adapted during the Microsoft service disruption

Study Findings Report

November 16, 2026 · Sentink Survey Platform · n = 451 respondents

Surveyed 451 full-time and part-time workers across six countries during the Microsoft outage

STUDY OBJECTIVES

- This study surveyed 451 full-time and part-time workers across six countries during a Microsoft IT outage. The goal was to understand the impact of the disruption and gather insights for improving downtime readiness.
- The findings offer actionable guidance for IT leaders and operations managers. This includes understanding employee reactions, the effectiveness of alternative tools, and organizational preparedness.
- The survey also explored employee experiences with emotional responses, work activity disruption, and the use of alternative communication methods. This helps paint a picture of the real-world consequences of such outages.

METHODOLOGY

Total respondents	451
Countries surveyed	6
Employment status	**Full-time** (69%), **Part-time** (25%)
Primary services affected	**Email delivery delayed** (56%), **Outlook unavailable** (53%), **Teams unavailable** (32%)
Impact on work	**Moderately affected** (43%), **Significantly affected** (33%)

01

Who We Heard From

Demographic and geographic composition of the survey sample

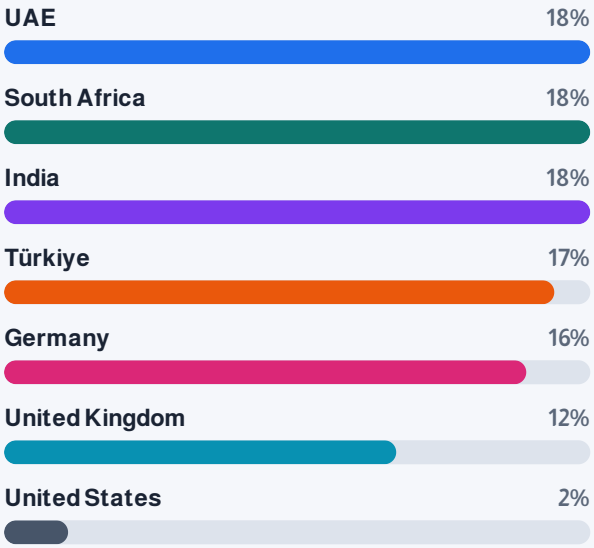
Who took part in the study

RESPONDENT SNAPSHOT

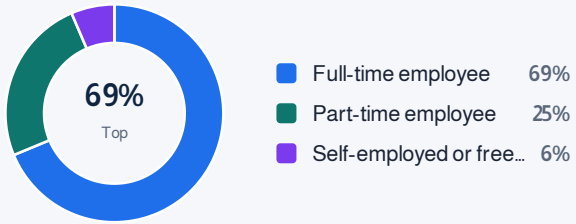
451
Total respondents

100%
Completion rate

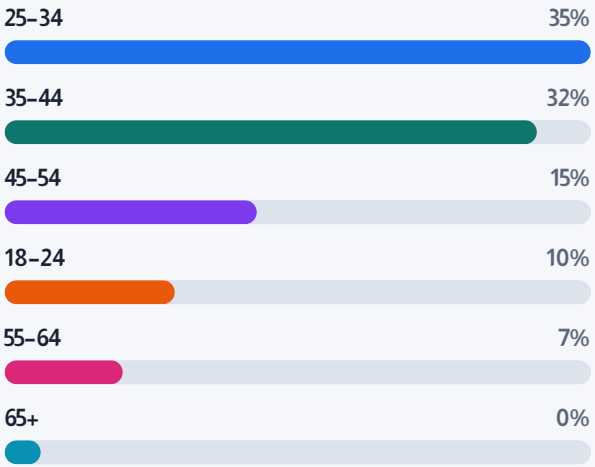
Q01. Country of employment



Q02. What is your current employment status?



Q06. What is your age group?



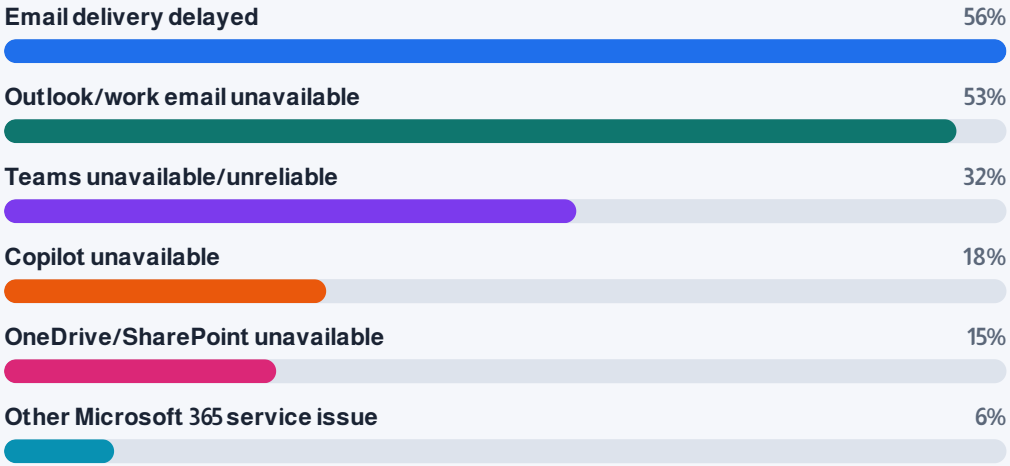
02

Extent of disruption

Email delays and Outlook unavailability caused the most widespread workplace problems

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Q04. Which Microsoft work services did you personally experience problems with during that period?



BASED ON 451 WORKERS SURVEYED ACROSS SIX COUNTRIES.

WHAT WE FOUND

Email delays and Outlook being down caused the biggest problems for workers during the Microsoft outage. More than half of those surveyed, 56%, said their email was delayed. Over half, 53%, found Outlook itself unavailable. These issues were far more common than problems with Teams or other services.

WHY IT MATTERS

When core communication tools fail, widespread workplace disruptions occur. This highlights the critical need for IT teams to prepare for and quickly resolve outages affecting email and collaboration platforms.

WHAT TO DO

1. Develop and test backup communication plans for email and calendar functions.
2. Train IT support staff on rapid response protocols for email and Outlook outages.
3. Identify and prioritize critical business processes dependent on Microsoft services for resilience planning.

BOTTOM LINE **Email delays and Outlook outages hit over half of workers during the Microsoft IT disruption.**

43% of workers faced moderate disruption to their normal daily duties

43%

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Q05. To what extent did these service problems affect your ability to complete or communicate about your work?



WHAT WE FOUND

Nearly half of workers, 43%, said the IT outage moderately disrupted their daily tasks. Another 33% faced significant disruption. This means most people struggled to do their jobs as usual, going beyond minor annoyances to real work slowdowns.

WHY IT MATTERS

Widespread disruption slows down entire teams and projects. This impacts productivity and can lead to missed deadlines, affecting overall business goals and employee morale.

WHAT TO DO

1. Develop clear communication plans for IT outages that inform staff of expected impact and duration.
2. Stockpile essential offline workarounds for common tasks that rely on email or cloud services.
3. Train staff on how to use backup communication channels during service disruptions.

BOTTOM LINE **Most workers experienced work disruptions due to the IT outage, impacting their ability to do their jobs.**

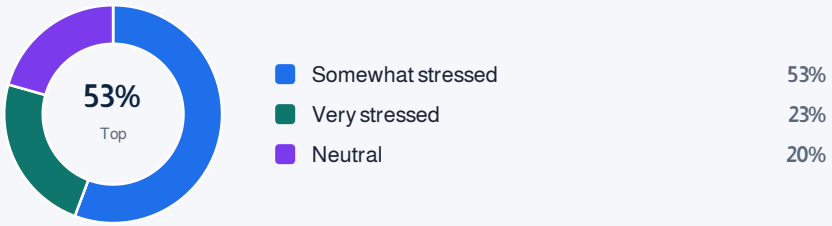
03

Employee reactions and feelings

Frustrated workers felt stressed while indifferent staff reported no stress at all

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Frustration



Indifference



WHAT WE FOUND

Frustration and Confusion answer differently on "Neutral": 20% against 29%. So the overall figure hides a difference between the two groups, and reading it alone can give a misleading picture. The gap describes what participants in each group said, and does not prove why.

WHY IT MATTERS

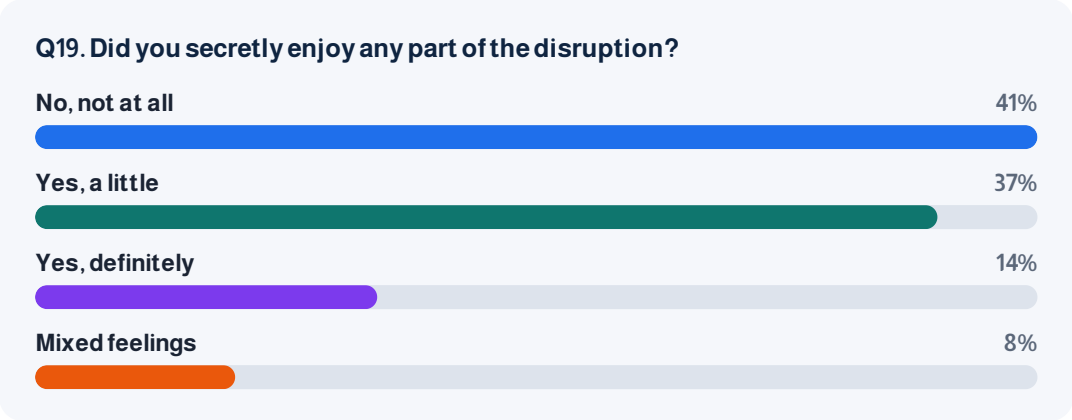
The gap means that what suits Frustration may not suit Confusion to the same degree. Any step built on this result needs to take both groups into account.

WHAT TO DO

1. Show the Frustration and Confusion results separately when discussing "Neutral", not only the overall figure.
2. Check how many participants are in each group before relying on the gap, and measure again if one group is small.

BOTTOM LINE **Frustration and Confusion do not answer the same way: 9 percentage points apart on "Neutral".**

41% of employees did not enjoy any part of the service disruption



BASED ON A SURVEY OF 451 EMPLOYEES ACROSS SIX COUNTRIES.

WHAT WE FOUND

While many workers felt stressed during the IT outage, 41% of employees reported they did not enjoy any part of the service disruption. Another 37% found some small enjoyment, and 14% definitely did. During the downtime, 35% of workers chatted with colleagues face-to-face, and 26% took extra breaks or went for a walk.

WHY IT MATTERS

The IT outage caused significant frustration for many. Understanding that some employees found ways to connect or de-stress shows a need for better support and communication during future disruptions.

WHAT TO DO

1. Develop clear communication plans for IT disruptions, explaining expected downtime and support channels.
2. Train IT support staff on empathetic communication during outages.
3. Offer employees flexible break options during system-wide issues.
4. Encourage informal colleague interaction during disruptions to maintain morale.

BOTTOM LINE **A majority of employees found the IT outage frustrating, but many also used the time for breaks and colleague interaction.**

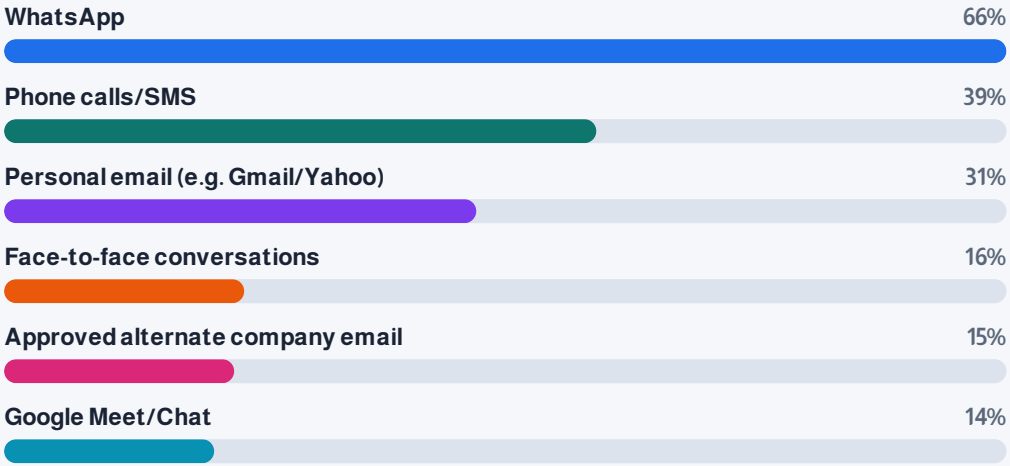
04

Communication and lost time

Two-thirds of employees switched to WhatsApp when corporate email failed

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Q24. Which alternative communication methods did you use for work because Microsoft services were disrupted?



WHAT WE FOUND

When Microsoft services failed, most employees found a way to keep working. Two-thirds, or 299 out of 451 workers, used WhatsApp for work messages. This was the most common alternative. Phone calls and SMS were used by 39% of workers, and 31% used personal email like Gmail.

WHY IT MATTERS

Reliable internal communication tools are vital. When primary systems fail, employees quickly adopt familiar, accessible tools, impacting productivity and data security.

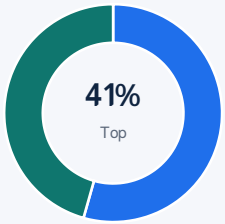
WHAT TO DO

1. Assess and approve popular messaging apps like WhatsApp for business use during outages.
2. Develop clear guidelines for employees on using personal or alternative communication tools for work.
3. Train IT teams on how to quickly restore essential communication services or enable approved alternatives.

BOTTOM LINE **When corporate email failed, 66% of employees turned to WhatsApp to communicate for work.**

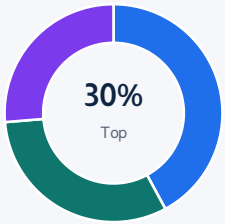
Workers in Türkiye lost far less time than those in South Africa

Türkiye



Less than 30 minutes	41%
30–60 minutes	34%

South Africa



More than 1–2 hours	30%
30–60 minutes	23%
More than 4 hours	19%

WHAT WE FOUND

Türkiye and Germany answer differently on "None": 0% against 15%. So the overall figure hides a difference between the two groups, and reading it alone can give a misleading picture. The gap describes what participants in each group said, and does not prove why.

WHY IT MATTERS

The gap means that what suits Türkiye may not suit Germany to the same degree. Any step built on this result needs to take both groups into account.

WHAT TO DO

1. Show the Türkiye and Germany results separately when discussing "None", not only the overall figure.
2. Check how many participants are in each group before relying on the gap, and measure again if one group is small.

BOTTOM LINE **Türkiye and Germany do not answer the same way: 15 percentage points apart on "None".**

05

In their own words

Workers described a mix of sudden confusion office social breaks and resilience

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> *Everyone suddenly started looking at each other, wondering if the problem was with their computers or if the whole world had stopped working. It was like we had travelled back 20 years in time!*
>
> SURVEY RESPONDENT

> *When Microsoft went down, the whole office suddenly became very social. People crowded around the coffee machine, and someone shouted "Is it down for you too?" as if they had made a great discovery. It felt loke an unplanned break for everyone.*
>
> SURVEY RESPONDENT

> *So many people were so happy because it happened on a Friday which is deemed as a day to not "work" at all*
>
> SURVEY RESPONDENT

> *Staff used personal WhatsApp groups to coordinate urgent payroll queries while email was offline, showing unexpected resilience.*
>
> SURVEY RESPONDENT

WHAT WE FOUND

When email services failed, workers felt sudden confusion about whether their own systems were broken. However, this quickly turned into an unplanned social break for many, with colleagues gathering to share the experience. Some teams showed resilience by using personal chat groups to handle urgent tasks.

WHY IT MATTERS

Downtime can disrupt operations and create uncertainty. However, it also presents an opportunity for informal team bonding and highlights the need for adaptable communication methods beyond primary systems.

WHAT TO DO

1. Prepare backup communication channels for critical tasks during outages.
2. Train staff on using alternative tools for urgent queries when primary systems fail.
3. Acknowledge and support informal communication networks that emerge during disruptions.

BOTTOM LINE **System outages cause confusion but can also foster unexpected social connections and resilience among workers.**

06

Main findings

Five main lessons from how employees navigated the global service outage

Five main lessons from how employees navigated the global service outage

1	Email delivery delays were the most common problem, affecting over half of workers surveyed. This shows how central email is to daily tasks.	56%
2	Nearly half of employees found the service problems significantly impacted their work. This highlights the high cost of such disruptions.	43%
3	Almost two-thirds of people felt stressed during the outage. This shows the emotional toll of unexpected technical failures.	41%
4	Most workers turned to messaging apps like WhatsApp to keep communicating. This shows that people will find ways to connect when primary tools fail.	66%
5	About 30% of employees were told to focus on offline tasks during the outage. This shows that organizations are trying to guide people through downtime.	30%

07

What to do

Three practical actions managers must take before the next IT outage

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RECOMMENDATION 1

Prepare alternative tools

Ensure teams can switch to other communication methods quickly, like WhatsApp or phone calls, when primary systems fail.

Linked to: Two-thirds of workers used WhatsApp during the last outage, showing its importance as a backup.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Clarify employee instructions

Managers must provide clear, simple steps for employees on what to do when IT services go down.

Linked to: Over half of workers (56%) experienced email issues, and clear guidance can reduce confusion and frustration.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Practice fallback plans

Managers should ensure any existing backup plans are actively used and tested, not just documented.

Linked to: While 36% had plans that were used, another 35% had plans that were not used during the outage.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Improve IT incident response

Invest in IT's ability to quickly identify, fix, and communicate about outages to minimize disruption.

Linked to: One in four workers (25%) spent over an hour waiting for systems to return, highlighting the need for faster IT fixes.

Thank you

This is the end of the report. We hope these findings help you make clearer decisions.

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