# MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE:
## THE INDIAN PICTURE
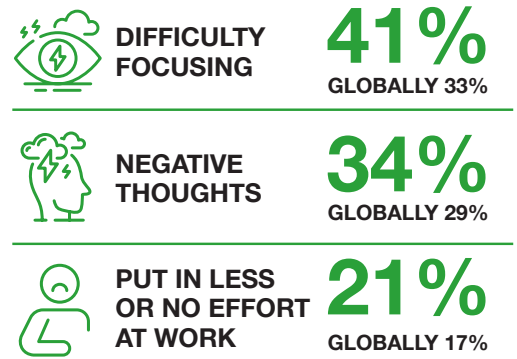
# SECTION 1.
## THE STATE OF WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH

**69%**

In India, over two thirds of workers overall say they are experiencing, or have previously experienced, mental health issues (globally 52%)

**35%**

Are experiencing ongoing mental health issues (globally 21%)

**74%**

Are ever concerned about their mental health (globally 68%)

### ISSUES EXPERIENCED IN THE PRIOR MONTH:

**56%** STRESS AT WORK (globally 52%)

**47%** CONCERNS ABOUT THE HEALTH OF A FAMILY MEMBER (globally 33%)

**45%** CONCERNS ABOUT OWN HEALTH (globally 39%)

### FEELINGS AT WORK IN THE PRIOR MONTH:

**DIFFICULTY FOCUSING** — **41%** GLOBALLY 33%

**NEGATIVE THOUGHTS** — **34%** GLOBALLY 29%

**PUT IN LESS OR NO EFFORT AT WORK** — **21%** GLOBALLY 17%

At 69%, Indian workers' experience of mental health issues is significantly above the global average of 52%, with 35% experiencing ongoing challenges (globally 21%). When asked whether they had felt negative emotions at work over the previous month, 91% of workers who have experienced mental health issues in India said they had felt one or more (compared to 67% of employees who have not experienced mental health issues).

The most common feeling experienced by those affected by mental health challenges was a difficulty focusing (47% vs 28% amongst those not affected). A lack of interest, motivation or energy – symptoms often associated with burnout - was ranked second (46% vs 30%). Worryingly, 40% had had negative thoughts (vs 21%), 33% considered their productivity was reduced (vs16%), and 33% felt a desire to quit their job over the previous month (16%) – showing the extent to which mental health can influence behaviours and mindsets in the workplace.

### Feelings at work

| Feeling | Experienced mental health challenges | Not experienced |
|---|---|---|
| Felt a lack of interest, motivation or energy | 46% | 30% |
| Had difficulty focusing | 47% | 28% |
| Had negative thoughts | 40% | 21% |
| Been irritable or felt angry with co-workers and/or customers/clients | 35% | 22% |
| Been less productive | 33% | 16% |
| Felt a desire to quit | 33% | 16% |
| Have put in less, or no effort at work | 25% | 10% |
| Had some other negative feelings about work | 26% | 13% |
| I have not experienced any negative feelings at work | 9% | 33% |

■ Experienced mental health challenges  ■ Not experienced

**The proportion of employees affected by work-related stress reaches 65% amongst Gen Zs.**

## STIGMA AND THE BARRIERS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AT WORK

Stigma regarding mental health issues at work is prevalent in India, even if broader culture seems supportive: 66% of respondents say that they work in a culture where people are not adversely affected for openly sharing their thoughts and feelings, yet 56% of respondents overall feel there is stigma in their workplace around mental health (37% globally), and in those workplaces, 75% of those experiencing mental health issues currently or in the past say they have personally felt stigma from colleagues as a result of these issues (compared with 57% globally).

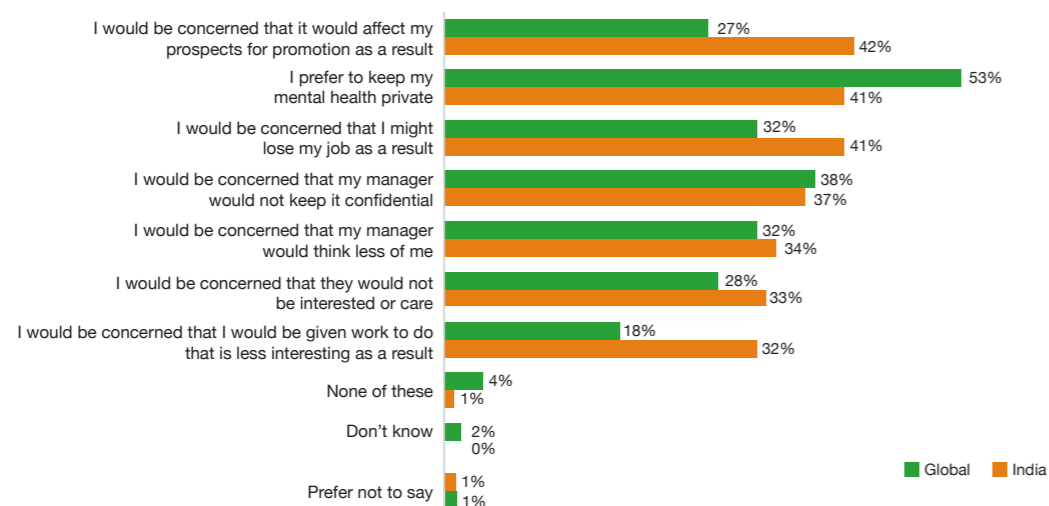Among those affected by poor mental health in India, 77% have told their managers about their issues, which is higher than the global figure of 53%, in spite of 71% of them saying they have been discriminated against as a result (well above the global figure of 50%). This proportion is even higher in some under-represented groups (90% neurodivergent, 81% for LGBTQIA+ groups).

Workers in India seem more willing to share mental health issues with their managers than average: 69% say they would tell their managers if they encountered mental health challenges (versus a global average of 56%) and 72% would be comfortable disclosing them as the reason for taking time off (vs 61% globally). Two-thirds of respondents (66%) feel that people would not be adversely impacted if they shared their thoughts and emotions in their place of work (vs 45% globally).

While the reasons behind a person's mental health issues are often complex, the data shows that work-related causes could play a significant role. Fifty-eight percent of workers in India mention they have experienced stress at work in the month before the survey – making it the highest-ranking issue of the seven issues measured. The proportion of employees affected by work-related stress reaches 65% amongst Gen Zs. Concerns about health reflected both personal health (45%) and that of family or partner (47%).

In spite of these challenges, workers in India reported higher levels of satisfaction with life overall than globally, with 31% rating that satisfaction a 9 or 10 out of 10, compared with 19% globally.

In considering the impact of work aspects on mental health, Indian employees are more positive about the impact on mental health across all aspects of work than globally. For example, both culture and the physical working environment are seen as having a positive impact by 47% of employees (respectively 36% and 37% globally).

**71%**
(globally 50%)
**Discriminated when telling manager**

**Key factors in disclosure**
**Concerns it would affect promotion prospects 42%** (globally 27%)
**Concerns about losing job 41%** (globally 32%)

**Stigma in the workplace**
**56%**
(globally 37%)

**69%**
(globally 56%)
**Willing to share experience of mental health issues with manager**

**67%**
(globally 42%)
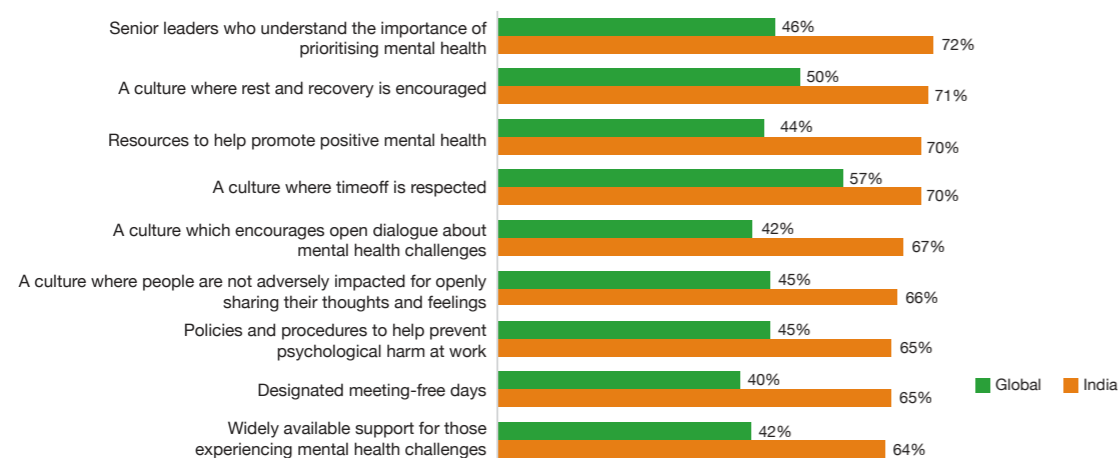**Culture that encourages open dialogue about mental health**

Strikingly, four in ten (42%) workers in India who say they wouldn't disclose issues to their managers cite concerns about prospects for promotion as a result – a much higher proportion than the global average (27%). Four in ten worry that they might lose their job as a result. These numbers are consistently higher for women than men.

## Reasons for not disclosing mental health as the reason for taking time off



| | Global | India |
|---|---|---|
| I would be concerned that it would affect my prospects for promotion as a result | 27% | 42% |
| I prefer to keep my mental health private | 53% | 41% |
| I would be concerned that I might lose my job as a result | 32% | 41% |
| I would be concerned that my manager would not keep it confidential | 38% | 37% |
| I would be concerned that my manager would think less of me | 32% | 34% |
| I would be concerned that they would not be interested or care | 28% | 33% |
| I would be concerned that I would be given work to do that is less interesting as a result | 18% | 32% |
| None of these | 4% | 1% |
| Don't know | 2% | 0% |
| Prefer not to say | 1% | 1% |

For 51% of women, confidentiality is the top reason, compared to 33% for men. Across the board, responses suggest Indian workplace environments are more supportive of mental health in India than globally. For example, 70% agreed that there were resources to help promote positive mental health (44% globally), and 67% considered there was a culture encouraging open dialogue about mental health challenges (42% globally).

## Workplace culture and policies that are in place



| | Global | India |
|---|---|---|
| Senior leaders who understand the importance of prioritising mental health | 46% | 72% |
| A culture where rest and recovery is encouraged | 50% | 71% |
| Resources to help promote positive mental health | 44% | 70% |
| A culture where timeoff is respected | 57% | 70% |
| A culture which encourages open dialogue about mental health challenges | 42% | 67% |
| A culture where people are not adversely impacted for openly sharing their thoughts and feelings | 45% | 66% |
| Policies and procedures to help prevent psychological harm at work | 45% | 65% |
| Designated meeting-free days | 40% | 65% |
| Widely available support for those experiencing mental health challenges | 42% | 64% |

# SECTION 3.
## SETTING THE TONE: THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF LEADERSHIP ON MENTAL HEALTH

Seventy-eight percent of workers in India feel that it's extremely or very important for employers to prioritise the mental health of employees in their workplace, and two thirds (66%) believe that supporting employee mental health is a top or high priority for their leaders. Encouragingly, 72% consider they have senior leaders who understand the importance of prioritising mental health. Also, when asked whether the head of their organisation talks about mental health, two-thirds of workers in India (66%) answer positively, well above the global average (40%), and in 83% of cases this is at least monthly.

Within organisations where leaders do not vocally address mental health, 65% of respondents think they should, a little higher than the global average (59%).

The research shows a clear improvement in perceptions and attitudes to work when heads of organisations choose to speak about mental health: in organisations where they do speak, 89% of workers feel their organisation cares about their mental wellbeing, whereas only 40% do when their leaders do not address it.

A clear narrative from senior leaders on mental health also correlates with more people opening up about their own issues: where heads of organisations speak about mental health, 75% of people are willing to disclose their issues to their managers, compared to 56% where they don't.

Whether senior leaders speak about mental health or not has less impact on individual feelings and behaviours in India than globally, though those in organisations where senior leaders do not speak up are more likely to feel a lack of interest, motivation or energy (47% vs 40%), or feel a desire to quit (30% vs 27%).

**66%**

Heads of organisations speak out (globally 40%)

**65%**

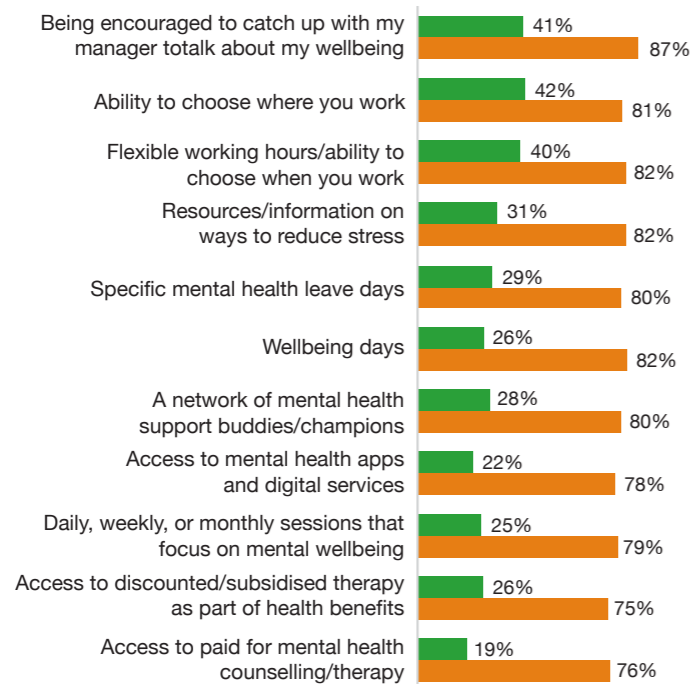Would like their head of organisation to speak out, where they do not already (globally 59%)

## WHERE THE LEADER SPEAKS OUT:

- The view of whether their "Employer cares about mental health" increases from **40% to 89%**

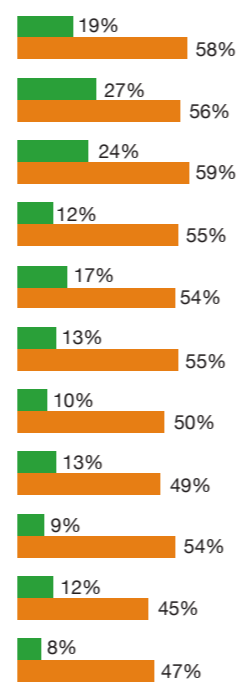- Lack of interest, motivation or energy reduces from **47% to 40%**

In organisations where the head of organisation speaks out, workers are more likely to report that support is available, and there is a greater tendency for that support to be used. For example, provision of wellbeing days rises from 26% to 82%, and the take-up of regular sessions on mental wellbeing from 9% to 54%.

## Types of support available

| Type | Head of organisation does not speak about mental health | Head of organisation does speak about mental health |
|---|---|---|
| Being encouraged to catch up with my manager to talk about my wellbeing | 41% | 87% |
| Ability to choose where you work | 42% | 81% |
| Flexible working hours/ability to choose when you work | 40% | 82% |
| Resources/information on ways to reduce stress | 31% | 82% |
| Specific mental health leave days | 29% | 80% |
| Wellbeing days | 26% | 82% |
| A network of mental health support buddies/champions | 28% | 80% |
| Access to mental health apps and digital services | 22% | 78% |
| Daily, weekly, or monthly sessions that focus on mental wellbeing | 25% | 79% |
| Access to discounted/subsidised therapy as part of health benefits | 26% | 75% |
| Access to paid for mental health counselling/therapy | 19% | 76% |

## Types of support used

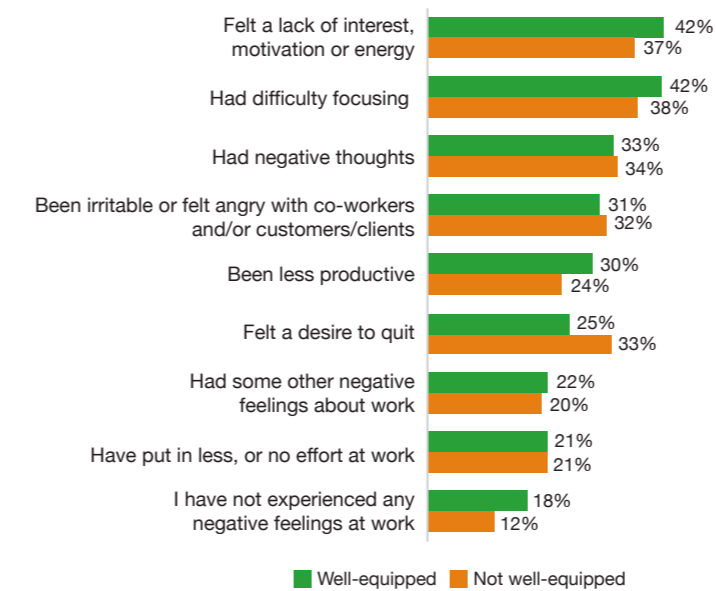| Type | Head of organisation does not speak about mental health | Head of organisation does speak about mental health |
|---|---|---|
| | 19% | 58% |
| | 27% | 56% |
| | 24% | 59% |
| | 12% | 55% |
| | 17% | 54% |
| | 13% | 55% |
| | 10% | 50% |
| | 13% | 49% |
| | 9% | 54% |
| | 12% | 45% |
| | 8% | 47% |

Legend:
- Head of organisation does not speak about mental health
- Head of organisation does speak about mental health

# SECTION 4.
## TRUST AND PROXIMITY: THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF LINE MANAGERS

Besides the instrumental role that senior leaders can play in speaking about mental health, the personal behaviours and attitudes of those with line management responsibilities are likely to be a key factor in supporting people's wellbeing. Relative to global figures, the impact on employees in India who consider their direct manager well-equipped to hold conversations about mental health report is lower, and not always clear, though there is a reduction in the desire to quit in the month before the survey: from 33% where the manager is not well equipped to 25% where they are.

### Feelings at work

| Feeling | Well-equipped | Not well-equipped |
|---|---|---|
| Felt a lack of interest, motivation or energy | 42% | 37% |
| Had difficulty focusing | 42% | 38% |
| Had negative thoughts | 33% | 34% |
| Been irritable or felt angry with co-workers and/or customers/clients | 31% | 32% |
| Been less productive | 30% | 24% |
| Felt a desire to quit | 25% | 33% |
| Had some other negative feelings about work | 22% | 20% |
| Have put in less, or no effort at work | 21% | 21% |
| I have not experienced any negative feelings at work | 18% | 12% |

Legend: Well-equipped / Not well-equipped

Extent manager is equipped to have supportive conversations on mental health

**69%**
OF MANAGERS ARE EQUIPPED FOR SUPPORTIVE CONVERSATIONS (GLOBALLY 48%)

**61%**
OF MANAGERS HAVE HAD TRAINING ON MENTAL HEALTH CONVERSATIONS (GLOBALLY 41%)

**WHERE THE MANAGER IS WELL-EQUIPPED TO HAVE THOSE CONVERSATIONS:**

DESIRE TO QUIT REDUCED FROM **33% TO 25%**

Managers who haven't had training on mental health conversations report lower levels of confidence in their ability to support people in their teams (68% vs 84% of those who have been trained). Similarly, 69% believe their manager is equipped to hold conversations that would help someone with mental health issues (vs 48% globally) and 71% workers overall feel their manager would be supportive if they shared their mental health challenges with them (against a global figure of 62%).

There remains work to be done by employers to invest in their managers' skills on mental health, though the Indian figure of 61% having had training on such conversations is above the global average of 41%. Notably, amongst those who have had training, 49% say this training was a 'one off' (globally 42%).
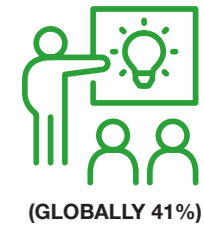
# SECTION 5.
## WORKPLACE SUPPORT: EXPECTATIONS VERSUS REALITY

**78%**
employees consider it important that workplace mental health is prioritised (globally 73%)

**76%**
perceive mental health to be a priority for their employer (globally 56%)

**74%**
say their employer provides mental health support (globally 53%)

**34%**
have not used regular sessions focusing on mental wellbeing but are willing to do so (globally 45%)

**37%**
use paid-for counselling where available (globally 18%)

**62%**
have access to paid-for mental health counselling therapy (globally 39%)

Whether mental health issues stem from work-related causes or not, it is clear that workers look to their employers to provide support. When asked about what can make the most positive impact on them personally at work, Indian respondents ranked a safe working environment highest of the seven aspects measured (48%), similar to the global response, with looking after their mental health ranked fourth, albeit still at 40% (globally 43%).

Encouragingly, in India, three-quarters (74%) of workers agree that their employer provides mental health support for staff, significantly higher than the 53% globally. Indeed, across all areas of support, more support is available, and respondents from India are more likely to have utilized the support available to them.

### Types of support available | Types of support used | Not used but willing to

| | Global | India | | Global | India | | Global | India |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Being encouraged to catch up with my manager to talk about my wellbeing | 52% | 76% | | 27% | 48% | | 36% | 27% |
| Ability to choose where you work | 43% | 71% | | 26% | 48% | | 49% | 33% |
| Flexible working hours/ability to choose when you work | 51% | 71% | | 33% | 50% | | 48% | 34% |
| Resources/information on ways to reduce stress | 45% | 69% | | 23% | 44% | | 44% | 32% |
| Specific mental health leave days | 42% | 67% | | 23% | 44% | | 51% | 35% |
| Wellbeing days | 39% | 67% | | 21% | 44% | | 51% | 33% |
| A network of mental health support buddies/champions | 38% | 67% | | 18% | 40% | | 41% | 33% |
| Access to mental health apps and digital services | 39% | 65% | | 19% | 40% | | 45% | 33% |
| Daily, weekly, or monthly sessions that focus on mental wellbeing | 36% | 65% | | 19% | 42% | | 45% | 34% |
| Access to discounted/subsidized therapy as part of health benefits | 39% | 62% | | 19% | 37% | | 47% | 35% |
| Access to paid for mental health counselling/therapy | 39% | 62% | | 18% | 37% | | 48% | 35% |

Legend: ■ Global ■ India