MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE:
THE NIGERIAN PICTURE

SECTION 1.
THE STATE OF WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH

44%

In Nigeria, a little under half of workers overall say they are experiencing, or have previously experienced, mental health issues (globally 52%)

11%

Are experiencing ongoing mental health issues (globally 21%)

85%

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

ISSUES EXPERIENCED IN THE PRIOR MONTH:

67%
CONCERNS ABOUT MONEY
(globally 50%)

63%
STRESS AT WORK
(globally 52%)

42%
CONCERNS ABOUT OWN HEALTH
(globally 39%)

FEELINGS AT WORK IN THE PRIOR MONTH:

LACK OF INTEREST, MOTIVATION, OR ENERGY — **48%** GLOBALLY 41%

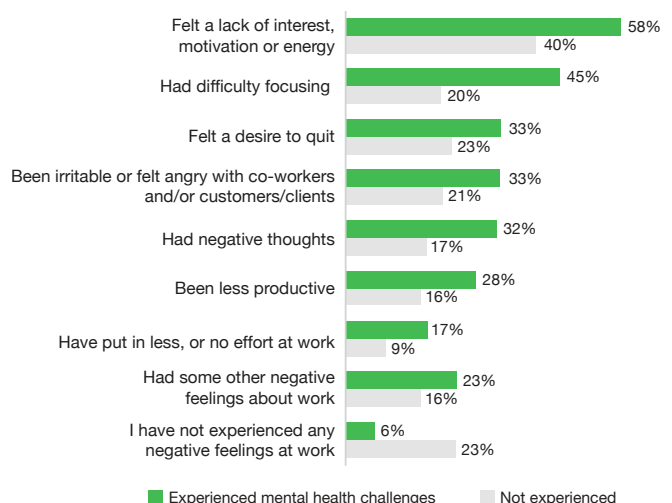**DIFFICULTY FOCUSING** — **32%** GLOBALLY 33%

DESIRE TO QUIT — **27%** GLOBALLY 25%

At 44%, Nigerian workers' experience of mental health issues is lower than found globally (52%), but a significantly higher proportion (85% compared with 68% globally) have concerns about their mental health. When asked whether they had felt negative emotions at work over the previous month, 94% of workers who have experienced mental health issues in Nigeria said they had felt one or more (compared to 77% of employees who have not experienced mental health issues).

A lack of interest, motivation or energy – symptoms often associated with burnout – was the most commonly experienced by those affected by mental health challenges (58% vs 40% amongst those not affected). Difficulty focusing came second (45% vs 20%). Worryingly, three in ten felt angry or irritable towards co-workers or clients (vs 21%), or felt a desire to quit their job over the previous month (33% vs 23%) – 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	58%	40%
Had difficulty focusing	45%	20%
Felt a desire to quit	33%	23%
Been irritable or felt angry with co-workers and/or customers/clients	33%	21%
Had negative thoughts	32%	17%
Been less productive	28%	16%
Have put in less, or no effort at work	17%	9%
Had some other negative feelings about work	23%	16%
I have not experienced any negative feelings at work	6%	23%

■ Experienced mental health challenges □ Not experienced

THE GLOBAL BUSINESS COLLABORATION
for Better Workplace Mental Health

Sixty-three percent of workers in Nigeria mention they experienced stress at work in the month before the survey – making it the highest-ranking issue of the seven issues measured behind concerns about money.

SECTION 2.
STIGMA AND THE BARRIERS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AT WORK

In Nigeria, stigma is still holding people back from sharing mental health issues at work, although figures are generally better than the global averages: 57% of respondents feel that people would not be adversely impacted if they shared their thoughts and emotions in their place of work (compared with a global average of 45%).

Thirty-two percent of Nigerian respondents overall feel there is stigma in their workplace around mental health (37% globally). In those workplaces, 54% of those experiencing mental health challenges say they have personally felt stigma from colleagues as a result (with the global proportion being 57%).
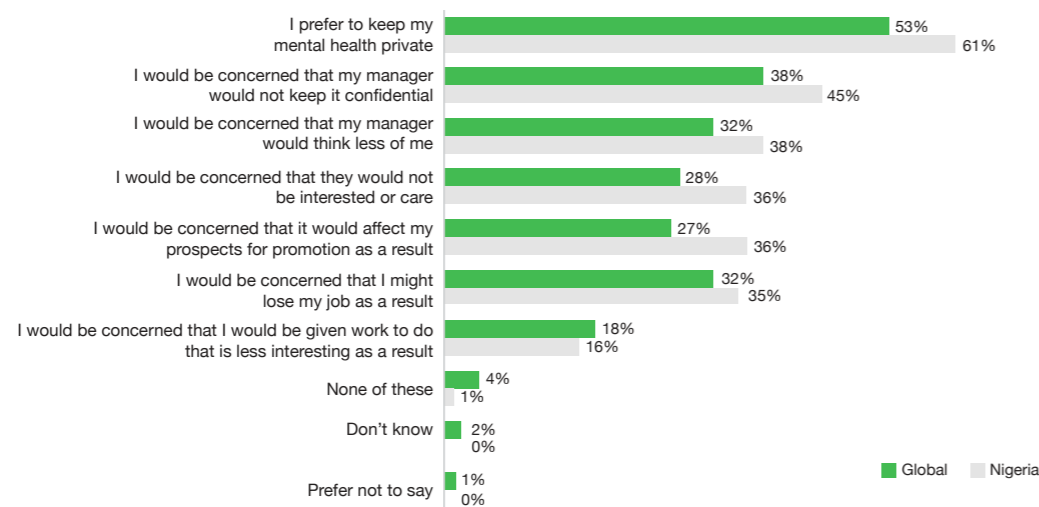
Among those affected by poor mental health in Nigeria, 59% have told their managers about their issues, slightly higher than the global figure of 53%, and 40% of those have been discriminated against as a result, lower than the global figure of 50%. This proportion is markedly higher in under-represented groups (85% neurodivergent and 65% with a disability).

Seventy-two percent of workers in Nigeria are willing to share mental health issues with their managers (higher than the global average of 56%) and 74% would be comfortable disclosing them as the reason for taking time off (61% 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. Sixty-three percent of workers in Nigeria mention they experienced stress at work in the month before the survey – making it the highest-ranking issue of the seven issues measured behind concerns about money, which is cited by 67%. Both figures are significant in all age groups, with concerns about money rising to 73% for Gen Z workers. Only 2% of Nigerian workers had experienced none of the listed issues in the prior month.

In considering the impact of various work-related aspects on mental health and more so than in the global numbers, more people in Nigeria believe their workload undermines their mental health (36%) than supports it (32%). The most supportive aspects for workers in Nigeria are working remotely/from home (58%), the physical working environment (50%), the culture at work (47%), and the management style of the manager (45%). All aspects are seen as more supportive than indicated by global averages.

40%
(globally 50%)
Discriminated when telling manager

Key factors in disclosure
Preference for privacy 61% (globally 53%). **Concerns about manager not keeping mental health issues confidential 45%** (globally 38%)

Stigma in the workplace
32%
(globally 37%)

72%
(globally 56%)
Willing to share experience of mental health issues with manager

53%
(globally 42%)
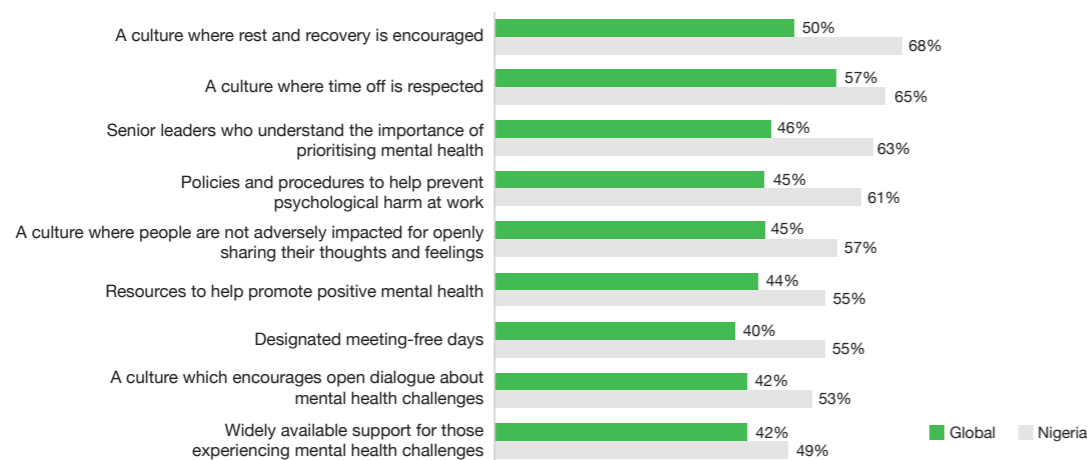**Culture that encourages open dialogue about mental health**

In terms of reasons for not disclosing mental health issues as the cause of people's absence, a preference for privacy (61%) comes first. But other reasons point to stigma: 45% feel that their manager would not keep their mental health challenges confidential and 38% that their manager would think less of them. These numbers are consistently higher for men than women, and there are marked differences between workplace generations: for example, privacy is a higher concern for Gen Xs (68%) than millennials (54%), whereas 29% of Gen Z workers are concerned they would be given less interesting work as a result, compared with 41% of Gen Xs.

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

Reason	Global	Nigeria
I prefer to keep my mental health private	53%	61%
I would be concerned that my manager would not keep it confidential	38%	45%
I would be concerned that my manager would think less of me	32%	38%
I would be concerned that they would not be interested or care	28%	36%
I would be concerned that it would affect my prospects for promotion as a result	27%	36%
I would be concerned that I might lose my job as a result	32%	35%
I would be concerned that I would be given work to do that is less interesting as a result	18%	16%
None of these	4%	1%
Don't know	2%	0%
Prefer not to say	1%	0%

When reflecting on the policies and cultural aspects that support mental health in their organisation, responses from Nigerian workers are consistently more positive than globally: more than two-thirds indicate a culture where rest and recovery is encouraged (68% vs 50% globally) and 61% that policies and procedures are in place to prevent psychological harm at work (vs 45% globally).

Workplace culture and policies that are in place

Policy	Global	Nigeria
A culture where rest and recovery is encouraged	50%	68%
A culture where time off is respected	57%	65%
Senior leaders who understand the importance of prioritising mental health	46%	63%
Policies and procedures to help prevent psychological harm at work	45%	61%
A culture where people are not adversely impacted for openly sharing their thoughts and feelings	45%	57%
Resources to help promote positive mental health	44%	55%
Designated meeting-free days	40%	55%
A culture which encourages open dialogue about mental health challenges	42%	53%
Widely available support for those experiencing mental health challenges	42%	49%

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

Nearly nine in ten workers in Nigeria (88%) feel that it's extremely or very important for employers to look after the mental health of their workforce, compared to 73% globally. Seventy percent believe that supporting employee mental health is a top or high priority for their leaders (vs 56% globally), and 63% that they have senior leaders who understand the importance of prioritising mental health (compared with 46% globally). When asked whether the head of their organisation talks about mental health 55% of workers answer positively, above the global average (40%).

Within organisations where leaders do not vocally address mental health, as many as 85% of respondents think they should, well above 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, 88% of workers feel their organisation cares about their mental wellbeing, whereas only 43% 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, 81% of people are willing to disclose their issues to their managers, compared to 55% where they don't.

Crucially, whether senior leaders speak about mental health or not seems to impact workers feelings about their place of work: those in organisations where senior leaders do not speak up are more likely to feel a desire to quit (36% vs 23%), or to feel lack of interest, motivation or energy (58% vs 43%).
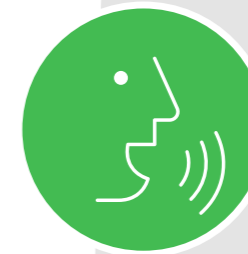
55%
Heads of organisations speak out (globally 40%)

85%
Would like their head of organisation to speak out, where they do not already (globally 59%)
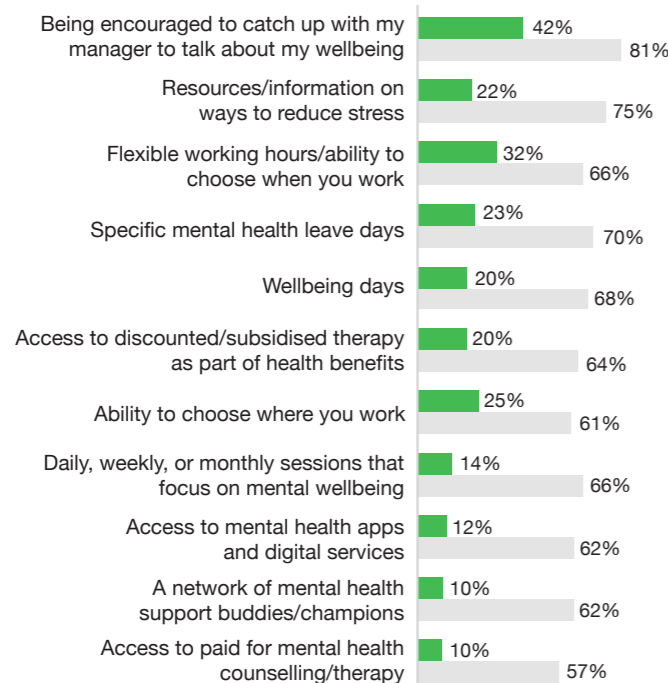
WHERE THE LEADER SPEAKS OUT:

- The view of whether their "Employer cares about mental health" increases from **43% to 88%**

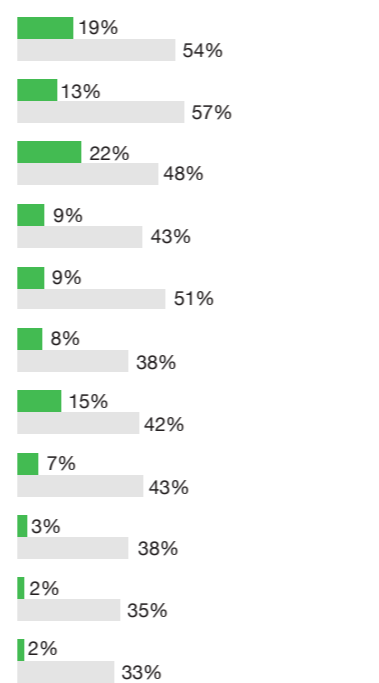- Workers' desire to quit reduces from **36% to 23%**

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, regular sessions focusing on mental wellbeing are provided in 66% of organisations where they speak out (14% where they do not), and the use of wellbeing days increases from 9% to 51%.

Types of support available

	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	42%	81%
Resources/information on ways to reduce stress	22%	75%
Flexible working hours/ability to choose when you work	32%	66%
Specific mental health leave days	23%	70%
Wellbeing days	20%	68%
Access to discounted/subsidised therapy as part of health benefits	20%	64%
Ability to choose where you work	25%	61%
Daily, weekly, or monthly sessions that focus on mental wellbeing	14%	66%
Access to mental health apps and digital services	12%	62%
A network of mental health support buddies/champions	10%	62%
Access to paid for mental health counselling/therapy	10%	57%

Types of support used

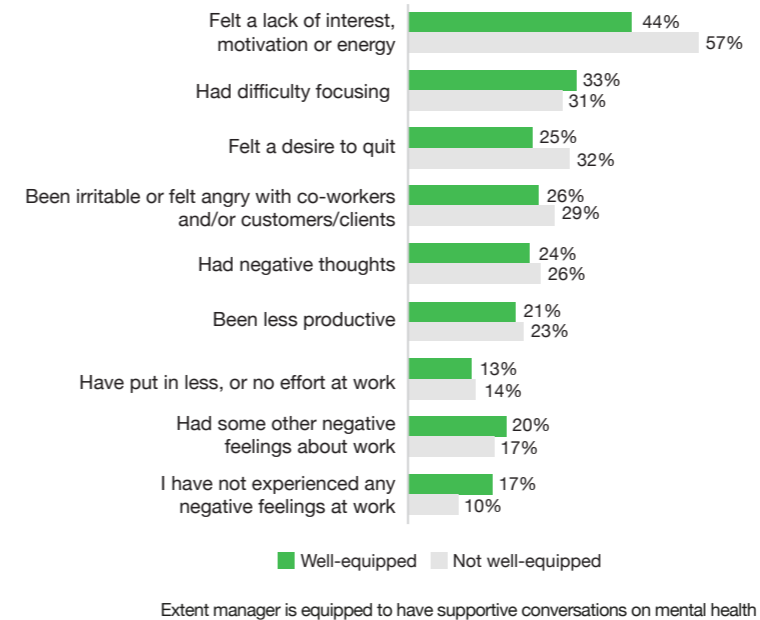|	Head of organisation does not speak about mental health	Head of organisation does speak about mental health
	19%	54%
	13%	57%
	22%	48%
	9%	43%
	9%	51%
	8%	38%
	15%	42%
	7%	43%
	3%	38%
	2%	35%
	2%	33%

■ 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. Employees in Nigeria who consider their direct manager well-equipped to hold conversations about mental health report even fewer negative feelings at work – including desire to quit – than when they have a senior leader who speaks about mental health.

Conversely, Nigerian workers who feel their manager is not equipped to have supportive mental health conversations report markedly worse experiences. Fifty-seven percent felt low levels of motivation in the month preceding the survey (vs 44% in those whose manager is well-equipped), 29% felt irritable or angry with colleagues or customers (vs 26%) and 32% report having felt a desire to quit (vs 25%).

Feelings at work

	Well-equipped	Not well-equipped
Felt a lack of interest, motivation or energy	44%	57%
Had difficulty focusing	33%	31%
Felt a desire to quit	25%	32%
Been irritable or felt angry with co-workers and/or customers/clients	26%	29%
Had negative thoughts	24%	26%
Been less productive	21%	23%
Have put in less, or no effort at work	13%	14%
Had some other negative feelings about work	20%	17%
I have not experienced any negative feelings at work	17%	10%

■ Well-equipped   ■ Not well-equipped

Extent manager is equipped to have supportive conversations on mental health

65%
OF MANAGERS ARE EQUIPPED FOR SUPPORTIVE CONVERSATIONS (GLOBALLY 48%)

47%
OF MANAGERS HAVE HAD TRAINING ON MENTAL HEALTH CONVERSATIONS (GLOBALLY 41%)

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

FEELINGS OF LACK OF INTEREST, MOTIVATION OR ENERGY REDUCED
57% TO 44%

DESIRE TO QUIT REDUCED FROM
32% TO 25%

Managers who haven't had training report lower levels of confidence in their ability to support people in their teams (70% vs 90% of those who have been trained). Similarly, 65% believe their manager is equipped to hold conversations that would help someone with mental health issues (vs 48% globally), although 72% of workers overall feel their manager would be supportive if they shared their mental health challenges with them (above the global figure of 62%).

Despite this, many employers are under-investing in their managers' skills on mental health, albeit the Nigerian figure of 47% having had training is above the global average of 41%. Even amongst managers who have had training, 39% say this training was a 'one off' (vs 42% globally).
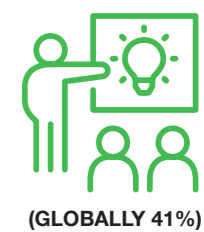
SECTION 5.

WORKPLACE SUPPORT: EXPECTATIONS VERSUS REALITY

88%
employees consider it important that workplace mental health is prioritised (globally 73%)

70%
perceive mental health to be a priority for their employer (globally 56%)

59%
say their employer provides mental health support (globally 53%)

53%
have access to specific mental health leave days (globally 42%)

35%
use wellbeing days where available (globally 21%)

55%
have not used regular sessions focusing on mental wellbeing but are willing to do so (globally 45%)

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, 48% of people mention employers looking after their mental health. In Nigeria it ranks behind a safe working environment (56%) and ensuring that employees can speak up if they experience non-inclusive behaviour at work (49%), which themselves are both conducive to workplace supportive of mental wellbeing.

Encouragingly, in Nigeria, a higher proportion of workers feel that their employer provides that support: 59% versus 53%. Yet, most types of support are available for fewer than half of workers in Nigeria, and the support is generally used by more than half of those for whom they are available.

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

	Available Global	Available Nigeria	Used Global	Used Nigeria	Not used Global	Not used Nigeria
Being encouraged to catch up with my manager to talk about my wellbeing	52%	65%	27%	41%	36%	39%
Resources/information on ways to reduce stress	45%	55%	23%	40%	44%	49%
Flexible working hours/ability to choose when you work	51%	53%	33%	38%	48%	52%
Specific mental health leave days	42%	53%	23%	30%	51%	57%
Wellbeing days	39%	50%	21%	35%	51%	53%
Access to discounted/subsidized therapy as part of health benefits	39%	48%	19%	27%	47%	57%
Ability to choose where you work	43%	47%	26%	31%	49%	58%
Daily, weekly, or monthly sessions that focus on mental wellbeing	36%	47%	19%	29%	45%	55%
Access to mental health apps and digital services	39%	43%	19%	25%	45%	59%
A network of mental health support buddies/champions	38%	43%	18%	23%	41%	54%
Access to paid for mental health counselling/therapy	39%	40%	18%	22%	48%	60%

Legend: ■ Global ■ Nigeria