

**Promoting Mental Health in the Workplace:
Best Practices for Covid-19 and in the Future**

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Abstract

Introduction/Background: This was a descriptive survey research project on promoting employee mental health. This project used a survey that was created in Qualtrics to assess what mental health services are offered by employers as well as the perception of those services by employees. The findings were then used to recommend best practices that organizations can use to improve employee mental health.

Methods: Data were collected through a Qualtrics survey that was distributed electronically via LinkedIn and professional/academic email listservs. Best practices for supporting employee mental health were researched using a literature review on the subject. There was a total of 203 validated responses. A convenience sampling approach was used which resulted in a non-statistically valid sample size. Descriptive statistics were generated using Microsoft Excel.

Results: There was a total of 203 validated responses. The survey had many findings that involved employees' knowledge of existing workplace-based mental health services offered by employers and the perception of those services by employees. A full report of the results is included as an appendix to this report.

Discussion: The three main implications of this research are that employees view their employers as having a responsibility to address mental health, that employees desire an organizational and interpersonal approach to workplace mental health programs, and that organizations can use workplace mental health services as a tool to attract or retain employees. The findings from the survey were used to inform a discussion of best practices for promoting employee mental health. Limitations of this research project include that a non-parametric sample was recruited for the survey.

Keywords: *workplace mental health, mental health awareness training, mental health stigma, Employee Resource Group, DEI*

Dedication

To begin, I must say that is a privilege to be able to pursue my dream of higher education and obtain a doctorate degree in my field of social work. I would like to thank my family (Mom, Jason, Malinda as well as others) and friends for supporting me through this time. I have had many ups and downs throughout the last few years and your encouragement has meant the world to me. I would like to thank the many great teachers and professors I have had throughout my time in education. Just a few that I would like to thank include Dr. Wayne Ingle (my high school English teacher and friend), Dr. James Wolk (my MSW program mentor), and the excellent professors (particularly Dr. Mindy Wertheimer, Dr. Karen Johnson, and Dr. Leah Cheatham) throughout my social work education. And of course, I must thank my committee members Dr. Nicole Ruggiano and Dr. Lewis Lee. This research would not be what it is without your guidance and input throughout this process. Thank you to all!

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Introduction

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, relationships between people and their communities went through significant transformation. This transformation caused immense stress and rapid change in society as schools, businesses, and community spaces were closed to mitigate the spread of the virus. The workplace was one of the most affected aspects of life by the virus. Prior to COVID-19, 23% of workers who could work from home did so; whereas at the height of the pandemic approximately 70% were working from home (Parker et al., 2022). For the “essential workers” who were unable to do their jobs remotely, being on the job carried new risks of infection and illness. These workplace conditions exerted enormous pressure on employees as they had to navigate new realities regarding their health and wellbeing.

The workplace is an ideal location for address mental health issues (CDC, 2019). While there is some burgeoning recognition of the need to address employee mental health, the US lags considerably behind its peer nations. For example, Canada has had a national Commission on Mental Health since 2013 that includes a focus on employee mental health (Mental Health Commission Canada, 2022). This Commission has created a set of voluntary standards and resources for employers to support their employee’s mental health needs (Mental Health Commission Canada, 2022). Considering the crisis from COVID-19, it is essential that workplaces have effective strategies in place to support their employees’ mental health. This article reviews current trends in mental health in the workplace. It then offers best practices that organizations may use to address employee mental health issues.

Review of the Literature

The Scope of Mental Health Challenges in the Workplace

Mental health challenges in the United States are an issue that affects many people. The

National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH) estimates that approximately 1 out of 5 adults (52 million people) deal with this issue on a daily basis (NIMH, 2022). For a variety of reasons, it can be a challenge to get precise numbers on the amount of people in the workforce with mental health challenges. But, with nearly 63% of American adults working (BLS, 2022) and approximately 20% of adults with a mental health issue, it can be conservatively estimated that millions of people in the workplace are struggling with mental health. Furthermore, this data was gathered prior to COVID-19 and does not take into account increases stemming from the pandemic.

Disproportionate Impact on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Employees

According to a report (Center for Workplace Mental Health, 2022) by the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the “rates of anxiety and depression symptoms have tripled since 2019”. And while the rates of increase have been significant across all racial groups, there is a racial disparity. From the same report, Black people in the United States went from screening positive for anxiety and depression in the first half of 2019 at a rate of 8% to 34% in the summer of 2020; the highest rate of any racial group. This shows that BIPOC populations are experiencing a disproportionate burden regarding mental health challenges from COVID-19 and that organizations should be prepared to support the specific needs of employees in the workplace. If organizations are committed to advancing equity at work, there should be an understanding that different groups of employees may have different approaches needed to address their mental health needs.

The Impact of Mental Health on the Organization

While the challenges of mental health in one’s personal life is widely understood, often hidden is the effect of mental health issues on the workplace. According to the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), depression alone can have severe ramifications for work. These ramifications include interfering with being able to complete a physical job 20% of the time, reductions in cognitive performance 35% of the time, and having the highest healthcare costs as compared to other employees (CDC, 2019). The World Health Organization estimates that depression and anxiety alone cost the world economy \$1 trillion dollars USD in lost productivity (WHO, 2022). Hence, the need to address mental health care in the workplace affects not only individual wellbeing, but the organization's financial wellbeing.

Methodology

The goal of the survey was to assess the types of services offered by organizations regarding mental health as well as the perception of employees about those services. The survey was used to determine the types of services considered most important by employees to better understand what organizations can do to support their employee's mental health. The findings were used to inform the best practice recommendations for organizations.

Research Questions

The research questions for this research project were: 1) what are the types of mental health related services that are offered by organizations, as perceived by employees 2) what are employee's perceptions of their organization's role in supporting their mental health, and 3) what are best practices that can be implemented to promote employee mental health by organizations?

Ethical Considerations/Protection of Human Subjects

The survey questions, distribution method, population, sample frame, and data analysis approach were approved by the Internal Review Board of the University of Alabama. No directly-identifying information was gathered on respondents. If respondents desired to be entered for a random drawing for a \$50 gift card incentive, they could enter their email address,

though email addresses were not linked to responses. No other use, analysis, or reporting of the email addresses were completed for the research project. All results were analyzed in Qualtrics which is password protected and unable to be accessed by any but the study's author.

Survey Design Background

To date, there has been limited survey research about organizational mental health services and employees' perceptions about workplace mental health services to guide the survey development for this project. The Center for Workplace Mental Health (2022) assessment tool is a free resource and was used as a framework for developing items for the survey. This tool is available for individual organizations to determine potential gaps in their mental health services for employees. In contrast, the survey is gathering data at the employee level regarding the services offered by the organization and their perception of them.

Project Population and Sample

The population for this research project was adult workers in the United States who were either currently employed or employed within the previous 12 months from the distribution date. The inclusion criteria were the requirement to be currently employed (full or part-time) or within the previous 12 months. Respondents also had to be able to read in English. For respondents who did not meet these criteria, the survey ended after this question. The intention for this inclusion criteria was to have respondents who had recently experienced workplace mental health services.

The survey used a convenience sampling approach by posting links to the survey on the social media site LinkedIn and professional/academic listservs. The survey included a question to screen for bots and spam respondents. The survey was open for approximately four weeks during February to March 2022.

Measurement Instrument

The survey had 21 core questions in addition to preliminary demographic questions. The demographic questions determined age, race, gender, and employment sector of the respondent. The core questions included five about the organization's services offered, twelve questions regarding the employee's perception of these services, three questions that only appeared for leaders, and one open-ended question about the effect of racism in the workplace on employee mental health. One question was included to determine the edibility of the respondent. The eligibility question was if the respondent had been employed either full or part-time within the previous 12 months. If the respondent indicated that they had not been employed within the previous 12 months, the survey ended for them. This was to ensure that only respondents with recent work history was answering the survey. One preliminary question was included to determine if the respondent was a manager or people leader. If the respondent indicated a manager status, the specific leader questions appeared for them.

The questions for the survey used multiple choice, Likert, and open-text question options. For the preliminary demographic questions as well as the questions about employee mental health benefits offered by organizations, the surveys use questions with pre-selected options for respondents. For the questions about employee perception about mental health benefits and services, a 5-point Likert scale was used for responses. For consistency, the same option types were used across all Likert scale response. For example, a response may be "very useful," "useful," "neutral," "not useful," and "very not useful." For the open-ended question, the survey asked participants, "Do you believe there is workplace racism that impacts employees' mental health?". Those who responded were then asked a follow-up question: "In what ways do you think racism in the workplace impacts employees' mental health?". A copy of the survey is included in the appendix.

Data Collection Procedures

The survey was created using Qualtrics software, a digital survey platform. Surveys are programmed into Qualtrics and are able to be anonymously distributed through digital venues. After the survey was developed, it was disseminated through social media posts and through academic/professional listservs. The survey had an incentive that randomly drawn respondents would receive a \$50 gift card. The respondents entered their email addresses and answered a simple question to ensure that the response was not from a bot.

Data Analysis

The data analysis strategy for this research project was to use descriptive statistics to address the research questions. The Qualtrics survey platform creates descriptive statistic reports using the respondents' data which contains frequency tables and charts. Excel was used to organize and analyze the data. For the one qualitative question, the answers were compared and contrasted with one another to identify themes across surveys. This approach was used to find key themes and concepts throughout the responses. The report full results are available in the Appendix.

Results

Survey Sample

The survey initially received nearly 300 responses, but after scrubbing the data for spam it was reduced to a final number of 203 responses. The respondents were asked to identify their employment sector from 11 categories. The two highest chosen responses were government or human services at 27% and healthcare services at 23%. The remaining responses ranged from 3% - 9% for the other sectors. The vast majority (85%) of respondents reported working at least 30 hours per week with 10% reporting part-time and 5% reporting variable hours. In the survey,

57% of the respondents reported being a manager of other employees as part of their job.

Regarding sex identity, 66% of respondents stated that female was their most accurate identifier and 26% reported male as the most accurate description with the remaining respondents selecting a different self-identifier. For race, 76% reporting being white, 7% Black, 6% Asian American or Pacific Islander, 4% multi-racial, 2% Native American, and 5% reporting an option not listed in the survey. For ethnicity, 20% reported their identity as Hispanic, Latino/a, or Latinx. The largest age range was 30-39 at 39%, followed by 40 – 49 at 31%, 19 – 29 at 19%, 50 – 59 at 8%, and finally 60 – 69 at 3%.

Quantitative Findings

Respondents indicated that their employers are proactive in providing mental health support. For instance, 71% reported that managers at their organization had resources like Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to refer employees to, 67% reporting that their organization takes steps to make employees aware of their EAP, and 62% reporting that their organization provides information on mental health to their employees. While some of the findings indicated that employers are responsive to mental health needs, other findings indicated that organizational structure and communication for employee mental health is underdeveloped. In the survey, 54% reported there were no clear policies relating to mental health at their organization, 50% reporting no opportunity to network or support fellow employees regarding mental health, and 82% of managers reporting that it would be helpful to receive training on mental health. This indicates some of the strengths and areas of opportunities for organizations regarding their employee mental health services.

There were also findings about employee perception of workplace mental health. Some of the key findings were that 88% of respondents agreed that it was an organization's

responsibility to support their employee's mental health. The survey found that 53% were either neutral or dissatisfied with their access to mental health services from their organization. The survey found that employers should be aware that 73% of respondents indicated that their organization's approach to mental health impacted their desire to remain employed at their agency. Regarding services that employees would find helpful, 77% reported that it would be useful to have access to an app that supports mental health through offerings such as therapy, better sleep or meditation. Finally, the survey found that the top two changes that respondents desired for their mental health benefits were clear language and communication around benefits (22%) and easier access to time off (28%) for mental health services.

Qualitative Findings

When asked, "Do you believe there is workplace racism that impacts employees' mental health?", 52% of respondents responded yes. Among those who were asked to describe the extent to which workplace racism impacts employee mental health, 135 provided a qualitative response.

While both people of color and white respondents answered the question "yes," the thematic findings of written responses to the open-ended question generally differed based on the participant's race. Many of the written responses by white respondents had elements that treated workplace racism as hypothetical. For example:

It is difficult to be happy in a workplace if your coworkers exhibit a trait (racism) that violates your core values. To be clear, I think racism exists in many workplaces but this is not a direct criticism of my own office. This is a general observation.

Similarly, another white respondent stated:

This does not pertain to our organization as we are very inclusive and promote and

embrace diversity, but I would imagine that if a racial minority felt they worked in a racist environment, or one that protected or overlooked racist or micro aggressive behavior it would lead to a negative and mentally unfit workplace--for all (who care).

As can be observed in these quotes from white respondents, workplace racism is seen as a negative, but hypothetical issue on the job.

In contrast, responses from people of color tended to have much more direct and personalized elements to their answers. For example, one participant stated, "Noticing different treatments towards me base on my accent or the fact that I'm not white. Micro aggressions." Another quote that follows this pattern is this one: "Feeling out casted, insecured (sic) and lonely. Can cause depression." While not all responses hewed to this polarized view of the effects of workplace racism, in the thematic analysis this did emerge as a common theme across the qualitative data. This indicates that while both white and employees of color may agree that workplace racism affects mental health, it is clear the lived experience of employees of color shape their views and responses.

Discussion

The survey results indicate that there is room for improvement in the way organization's approach the mental health of their employees. While one survey cannot provide complete clarity for organizations on how to approach their mental health programs, there are insights that can be taken away from it. The first is that employees do look to their organizations to have a comprehensive approach to mental health. This approach should include access to services like apps as well as communicating more clearly about benefits and making it easier to access time-off for mental health services. Another key insight was that employees are looking for interpersonal support and not just benefits. This could be seen from responses about the need for

leader training on mental health and that employees did not feel like they received opportunities for peer support and networking regarding mental health. This indicates that employees desire some level of personal support for their mental health needs.

A final insight would be that employers need to view mental health services as a potential retention tool for employees. In the survey, 73% of employees reported that their organization's approach to mental health either "greatly" or "moderately" affects their desire to be employed there. In another question from the survey, less than half of respondents reported that they were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the way their organization approached mental health. While these findings are just from one survey, it lends credence to the idea that employee's expectations include a focus on mental health from their employers. The organizations that will be better positioned for attracting talent will be ones that can address their employee's mental health in a positive way. Hence, an organization's investment in employee mental health could support retention and recruitment efforts. Based upon these survey findings, the following section will highlight three key best practices for employee mental health that organizations can enact.

Research Informing Practice

One outcome from the research project was the creation of a training for organizations focused on the mental health needs of their employees of color. The research project was partially funded by a grant from Columbia University's School of Social Work's Faculty Micro-Grant program focused on racial justice and mental health. The findings of the survey as well as the best practices for employee mental health were synthesized and incorporated into a one-hour free training with Continuing Education Units provided to social workers for attending it. Four separate trainings were held with a variety of groups ranging from academic hospital staff to a

private mental health provider office to a large metropolitan school system. The goal of the training was to raise awareness of the need to consider the effects of workplace racism on employees of color's mental health and steps to promote their mental wellbeing.

Best Practices that Promote Employee Mental Health

There are many ways an organization could undertake steps to promote employee behavior change regarding mental health. Three specific steps will be discussed here which are: training leaders to recognize and refer employees who are struggling, using Employee Resource Group (ERG) promoting mental health, and communication campaigns about mental health in the workplace.

Leader Training Regarding Mental Health

Both the CDC and the WHO support the idea of awareness training for managers as one strategy for addressing employee mental health (CDC, 2019; WHO, 2022). While more exploration is needed on the topic of what constitutes mental health training for management, several sources support this type of initiative beyond the CDC and WHO. The range of approaches include training for leadership regarding mental health (Goetzel et al., 2018) to teaching leaders what organizational resources are available to staff experiencing mental health issues (Gowans & Robbins, 2012). This indicates that a worthwhile intervention would be the training of managers to support staff with mental health challenges. Per the previously discussed survey results for this research project, 82% of managers stated that having training on employee mental health issues and services to support them would be beneficial to them as a leader. One such reason that leader training is so pivotal is because managers are typically the most in-touch and observant relationship in the workplace with employees. Hence, the manager would be one of the most likely people to be aware of a struggling employee and be able to provide support.

One such way a leader can offer support to an employee with a mental health challenge is through referring them to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Dimoff and Kelloway (2019) note “98% of medium to large organizations in the United States provide employee assistance programs (EAPs) to their employees, but utilization rates are less than 4% each year” (p.5). While these figures were prior to COVID-19, it demonstrates that historically the use of EAPs are very low. In one study, a single 3 hour Mental Health Awareness Training (MHAT) was developed and deployed to managers (Dimoff & Kelloway, 2019, p.6). The MHAT training consisted of lecture-based modules and interactive case studies and videos. The lectures focused on helping managers identify mental health needs in staff, find and offer appropriate resources, and monitor the staff’s wellbeing. One key aspect of the training is that managers were taught to “detect, not diagnose” mental health issues. To assist in this detection, the participants were given a checklist to help sort through employee behaviors (Dimoff & Kelloway, 2019). In addition to the checklist, the managers were given a binder that was designed to be their single source of reference regarding mental health issues and staff.

The study found that leaders reported communicating more about mental health and resources and taking more actions to increase employee resource usage. It was found that the checklist tool given to them as part of the training was considered very useful by the managers. Employees reported that they perceived an increase in communication from their leaders regarding mental health and resources as well as that their managers were more considerate of struggling employees. The employees showed an increased willingness to use EAP resources as well as following through using EAP resources (p. 14). This study clearly shows that the concept of using leader training as a method for impacting employee mental health is a valid one for consideration. In addition to this particular study, there are several others that support this type of

approach for improving employee mental health (Dimoff et al., 2016; Shann et al., 2019; Milligan-Saville et al., 2017). By investing in training leaders to detect signs of mental health issues and refer to the EAP, organizations can make a positive impact on the mental wellbeing of their employees.

Creating An Employee Resource Group for Mental Health

Employee Resource Groups (ERG) are one important source for providing community and reducing stigma regarding mental health at work. In 2020, Porter and colleagues (2020) provided detailed guidance on best practices in creating an ERG for mental health and the different items to be aware of in the process. But the essential component is to build support for the ERG with both senior-level and front-line employees. This will necessitate working with Human Resources and/or Legal to ensure appropriate guidelines are in place for the ERG so that it stays a supportive, helpful, and safe resource for employees. One way of building broad support is to make an ERG about mental health awareness and allyship. This allows anyone to join without having to disclose their personal status relating to mental health. Activities that a mental health ERG can do to raise awareness and reduce stigma are facilitating lunch-and-learns on various mental health topics, employee panels can share their experiences with mental health, and hosting a social event to raise funds for mental health related causes.

If an organization is not ready yet to start an ERG focused exclusively on mental health awareness, there are other options to promote community building around this topic as well. Most organizations that have ERGs organize them around specific social identities such as race, gender, or sexual orientation (as well as allyship to those identities). Existing ERGs can sponsor mental health awareness activities that focus on their particular focus group. An example might be an ERG for Black employees inviting a Black therapist to speak at their meeting about stigma

in their community or to answer common questions about cultural relevant treatment options. Some organizations have ERGs that are also based on identities such as working parents or being a military veteran. A working parents ERG could talk about stress reduction at home during the holiday season and a veteran's ERG could discuss issues around transitioning to civilian life and the challenges inherent in it. The key point is that ERGs are excellent at building community and raising awareness, hence involving them in an organization's strategies for mental health promotion is helpful.

Mental Health Communication Campaigns

Beyond leader training and ERGs, organizations can promote employee mental health through messaging campaigns. One straightforward approach would be to clearly explain mental health benefits available through the organization. This communication could take many forms. One option would be to have forums to discuss how to access the company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and utilize its mental health benefits. As previously discussed, historically EAP usage is extremely low among employees. Helping to break down how to find and use their EAP benefits could help promote an important resource to employees. In a similar manner, using common language explanations around health and wellness benefits could assist employees in using services. While the HR professionals who frequently design employee benefit packages may be well-versed in understanding terms like "co-pays", deductibles", or "in-network", the average worker may not understand the various nuances around locating and paying for mental health care. Clear communication around these benefits can minimize misunderstandings when employees need to find mental health care. Finally, having frequent communications from leaders where they discuss their own personal struggles with stress, mental health, and wellbeing help give permission and break down stigma for other employees to be

open about their own issues. Communication campaigns are a powerful way to break down stigma and support employee mental health.

Limitations

Limitations for this study are that a non-parametric sample size was recruited for the project. This means that while the survey results are instructive, they are not generalizable for the purposes of a research project. A second limitation is that the survey relies on self-reported data from participants on their employer's mental health offerings. Potentially this creates a limitation as employees may be more confident in their view of what an employer offers than reality.

Conclusion

With the reality of COVID-19s, organizations should be aware of the way that their employees have been impacted by this pandemic. Organizations should not assume that the employees who are returning to office will be unchanged from the time they left in March of 2020. Recognizing that the workforce has changed regarding their mental health needs is vital if organizations want to be seen as places that are equitable and desirable. Beyond the moral imperative for organizations to promote their employees' mental health, there is a business case as well in the form of lost productivity, retention, and recruitment. With many people spending a significant portion of their lives at work, this makes the workplace an ideal venue for disseminating information and improving support for mental health. In addition to the benefit for employees, improving employee mental health could be a financial and performance asset for companies and organizations. This makes the topic of addressing mental health in the workplace one to approach with urgency, as the wellbeing of employees create a compelling need.

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Appendix A

Survey Instrument

Please read this informed consent carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Consent Form Key information:

- This study is about mental health supports in the workplace, your perception of them, and workplace factors that impact your mental health
- The survey should take about 10-15 minutes to complete
- The answers are anonymous
- There is the opportunity to enter your email address for a drawing for one of four \$50 gift cards; the email address will be deleted after the drawing
- The benefit from the survey is that you will help inform organizations about how to support workers' mental health

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of the study is to assess your perception of support for mental health in your primary place of employment. The goal of this research is to 1) determine the level of support that organizations provide for mental health services for their employees, 2) the perception of employees about their organization's mental health support and 3) to see how different groups of employees' experiences differ.

What you will do in the study: In this study you will answer questions about the types of supports for mental health that are offered by your organization, your perception of these supports, and what barriers and/or supports for mental health that you observe in the workplace. Almost all questions are single choice with a few that have the option for typing a free response in.

If you have any concerns while completing the survey, please close the survey, and do not finish it. You may stop the survey at any time.

Time required: The study will require about 10-15 minutes of your time to complete the survey.

Risk: There are no anticipated risks from completing this survey.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help us understand how organizations can better support employees' mental health.

Confidentiality: The survey collects your responses anonymously. There is no attempt to identify or locate you for completing a survey. There is no way of linking your survey to you personally. The information will be stored in a survey database. If you choose to enter your email address for the gift card drawing, then that data will be deleted upon the drawing being completed. The drawing will be done within 7 days of the survey ending at which time the email addresses will be deleted by the researcher.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

How to withdraw from the study: If while completing the survey you decide you would like to withdraw, simply close the survey, and end the session. Only completed surveys will be counted in the study. If you have completed the survey, there is no way to withdraw your information because of the anonymous nature of the survey.

Compensation/Reimbursement: You will receive no payment for participating in the study. You will have the option at the end of the survey to enter your email address for a chance to win one of four \$50 gift cards. Your odds will be based upon the final number of respondents to the survey.

If you have questions about the study or need to report a study related issue please contact, contact:

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Email address: nruggiano@ua.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, would like to make suggestions or file complaints and concerns about the research study, please contact:

Ms. Tanta Myles, the University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer at (205)-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach Website at <http://ovpred.ua.edu/research-compliance/prco/>. You may email the Office for Research Compliance at rscompliance@research.ua.edu.

I consent to participate in this study (survey) – [click here](#) (will commence survey)

I do not consent to participate in this study (survey) – [click here](#) (will end survey)

Screening Question

(To determine if they qualify to take the questionnaire)

- 1) Are you either employed currently or been employed in the previous 12 months?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No (end of survey)

Respondent Background

- 2) Please select the industry that you work in (or closest to it)?
 - a. Government, public administration, human services
 - b. Healthcare Services
 - c. K-12 Education
 - d. Higher Education
 - e. Insurance Services, Banking, Finance
 - f. Media, Creative Fields, Art
 - g. Business, Finance, and Administrative Occupations
 - h. Natural and applied sciences
 - i. Sales and Customer Service Occupations
 - j. Trades, transportation, and related production
 - k. Other industry not listed
- 3) Do you work full or part-time (defined as less than 30 hours per week) on average?
 - a. Full-time
 - b. Part-time
- 4) Do you manage other employees as a part of your job?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 5) Which of the following most accurately describes you?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Non-binary
 - d. Transgender
 - e. Intersex
 - f. A different description
 - g. I prefer not to say
- 6) Which category best describes your race?
 - a. Black or African American
 - b. Asian American or Pacific Islander
 - c. Native American or Alaskan Native
 - d. White or Caucasian
 - e. Multi-Racial
 - f. A race or ethnicity not listed here

- 7) Do you identify as Hispanic or Latino?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

- 8) What is your age range?
 - a. 18-29
 - b. 30-39
 - c. 40-49
 - d. 50-59
 - e. 60-69
 - f. 70 and above

Organizational Assessment

The following section will contain questions about the mental health services and supports offered by your organization. If you are not sure about an answer, it is appropriate to select the “I don’t know/I’m not aware” option.

- 9) Does your organization provide resources and information **to all employees** about mental health such as: prevalence rates, early warning signs, how to talk with a co-worker you are concerned about, and how to help yourself or a co-worker connect with care?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I don’t know/I’m not aware

- 10) Does your organization have **clear policies supporting workplace mental health** like: allowing employees to take mental health leave, return to work policies after mental health leave and more?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I don’t know/I’m not aware

- 11) Does your organization provide **opportunities for coworkers to network and support** each other regarding mental health issues (through employee resource groups or employee community groups)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I don’t know/I’m not aware

- 12) Does your organization **take steps to make employees aware of available mental health supports** and services, either through an EAP or other services?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I don’t know/I’m not aware

- 13) Does your organization **support stress reduction and stress management** through activities such as meditation, mindfulness, exercise or tools like mental health, sleep or personal development apps?
- Yes
 - No
 - I don't know/I'm not aware

Manager Only Questions

(#14-16 will only display for respondents who answer yes on #4)

- 14) Does your organization provide **manager or supervisor** training for supporting employees who may be experiencing mental health issues and how to help them?
- Yes
 - No
 - I don't know/I'm not aware
- 15) Do **managers have resources available** (like an Employee Assistance Program or other supports) to refer employees to who may be experiencing mental health challenges?
- Yes
 - No
 - I don't know/I'm not aware
- 16) Please rate how helpful it would be in your role as a manager to have training about topics related to employee mental health and services available for your employees?
- Very helpful
 - Helpful
 - Neutral
 - Unhelpful
 - Very unhelpful

Employee Perceptions About Workplace Mental Health Services

The following questions are about your perception of workplace mental health. If you are not sure about an answer, it is appropriate to select the "I don't know/I'm not aware" option.

- 17) How much do you agree that it's an organization's to provide support for mental health to employees?
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
- 18) Does your organization ask employees **questions about their mental health in surveys** or other formal assessments?
- Yes

- b. No
- c. I don't know/I'm not aware

19) Please rate your **satisfaction** with access to the mental health support you want or need using your organization's resources?

- a. Very satisfied
- b. Satisfied
- c. Neutral
- d. Dissatisfied
- e. Very dissatisfied

20) Please rate your **satisfaction with how supportive the leadership** of your organization is regarding employee mental health.

- a. Very satisfied
- b. Satisfied
- c. Neutral
- d. Dissatisfied
- e. Very dissatisfied

21) How much of an **impact do you believe accessing mental health services** through your organization could **affect opportunities for advancement or promotion**?

- a. A very positive impact
- b. A positive impact
- c. Neutral
- d. A negative impact
- e. A very negative impact

22) Does your organization **have a diversity program** that addresses inclusion and belonging in the workplace?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know/I'm not aware

23) How **useful would it be** for your organization to provide supports such as mental health, sleep, meditation, or personal development apps be for your mental health?

- a. Very useful
- b. Useful
- c. Neutral
- d. Not useful
- e. Very not useful

24) How much does your workplace's approach to mental health affect your desire to remain at the organization as an employee?

- a. Greatly affects
- b. Moderately affects

- c. Somewhat affects
- d. Does not affect

25) How satisfied are you with your organization's approach to mental health in your workplace?

- a. Very satisfied
- b. Satisfied
- c. Neither satisfied or unsatisfied
- d. Dissatisfied
- e. Very dissatisfied

26) What changes could your workplace make to improve mental health support for its employees?

- a. Clear language around mental health benefits
- b. Easier access to time-off for mental health services
- c. Employee Resource Groups (employee peer groups) for mental health
- d. Low or no-cost access to therapy
- e. Free or reduced cost access to apps for sleep, meditation, or other personal development activities
- f. Other for not included

27) Which mental health services or supports do you feel would be beneficial to you? (Select all that apply)

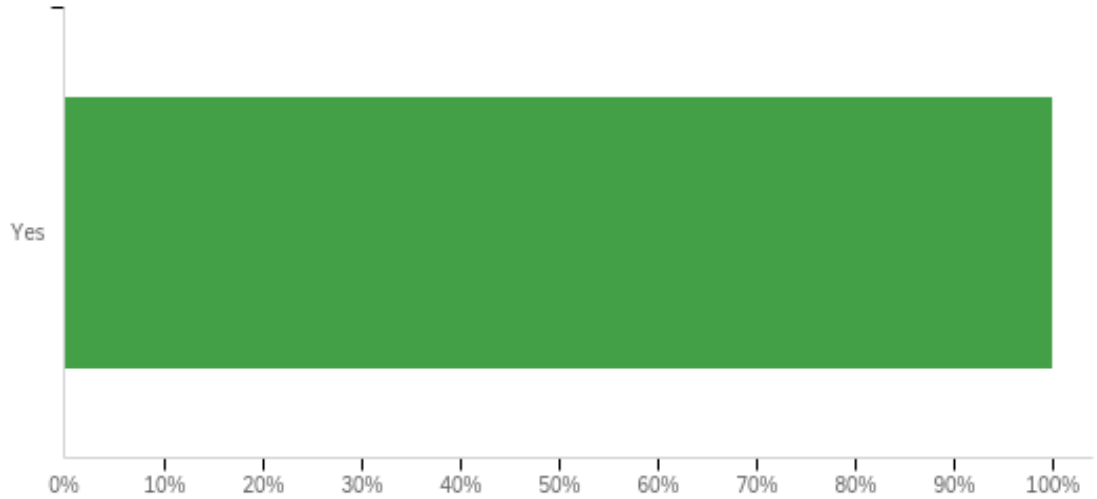
- a. Free or low-cost therapy through employer insurance
- b. Online therapy or therapy available through an app
- c. Mental health days or the ability to use sick days for mental health
- d. Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) for things like childcare, stress reduction or coaching
- e. Mental health training for employees on how to access services
- f. Training for managers on how to recognize signs of mental health issues for employees
- g. Wellbeing practices such as walk-at-work programs, workplace meditation/yoga, or other similar activities
- h. Employee resource groups focused on peer support for mental health
- i. Communication campaigns about stigma about mental health and services available
- j. Something else (please enter)

28) In what ways do you think racism in the workplace impacts employees' mental health? Please describe.

Appendix B

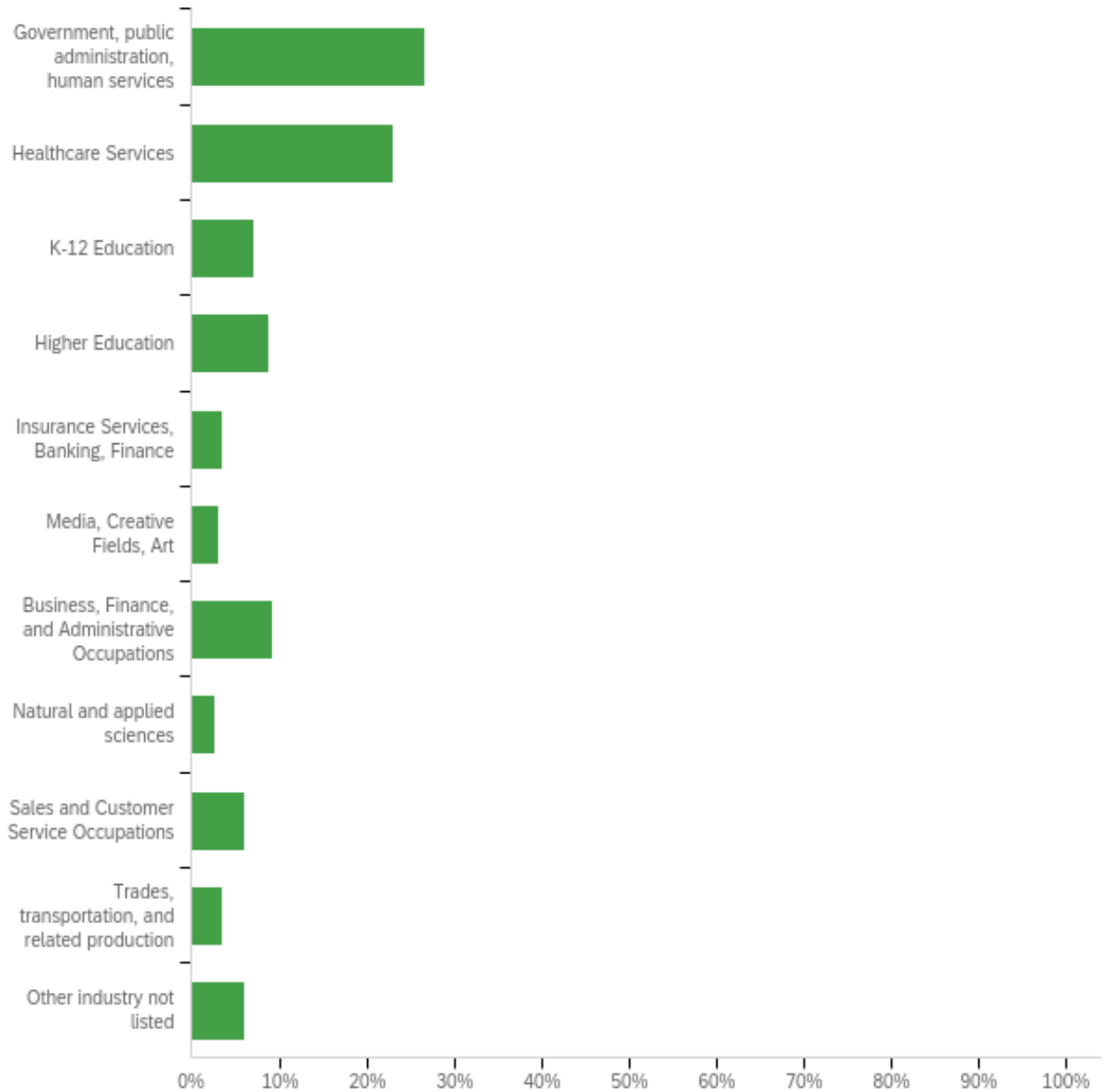
Complete Survey Results

Q3 - Are you either employed currently or been employed in the previous 12 months?



#	Are you either employed currently or been employed in the previous 12 months?	Percentage
1	Yes	100%
	Total	195

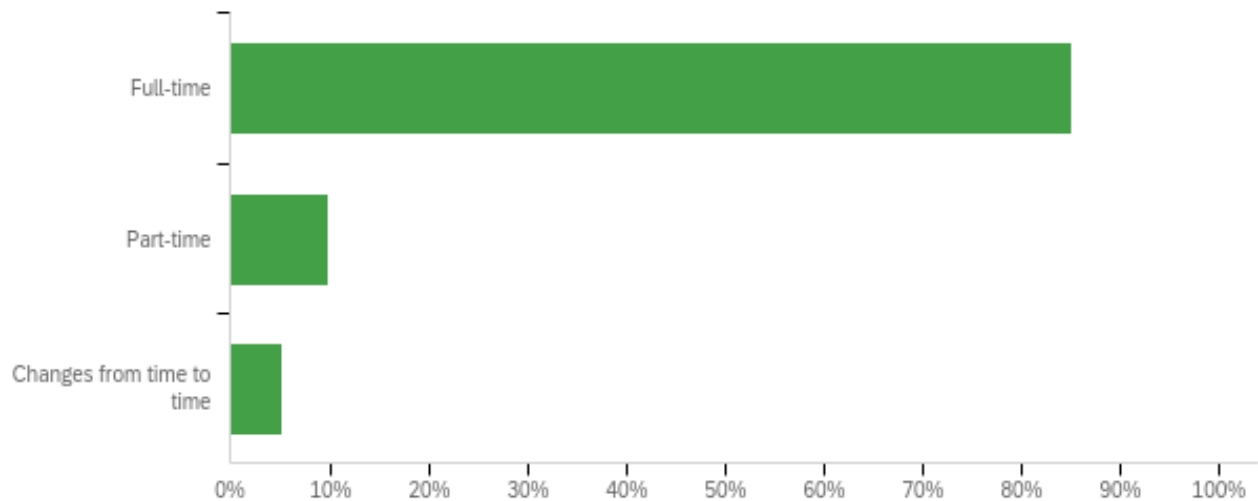
Q4 - Please select the industry that you work in (or closest to it)?



#	Please select the industry that you work in (or closest to it)?	Percentage
1	Government, public administration, human services	27%
2	Healthcare Services	23%
3	K-12 Education	7%
4	Higher Education	9%
5	Insurance Services, Banking, Finance	4%

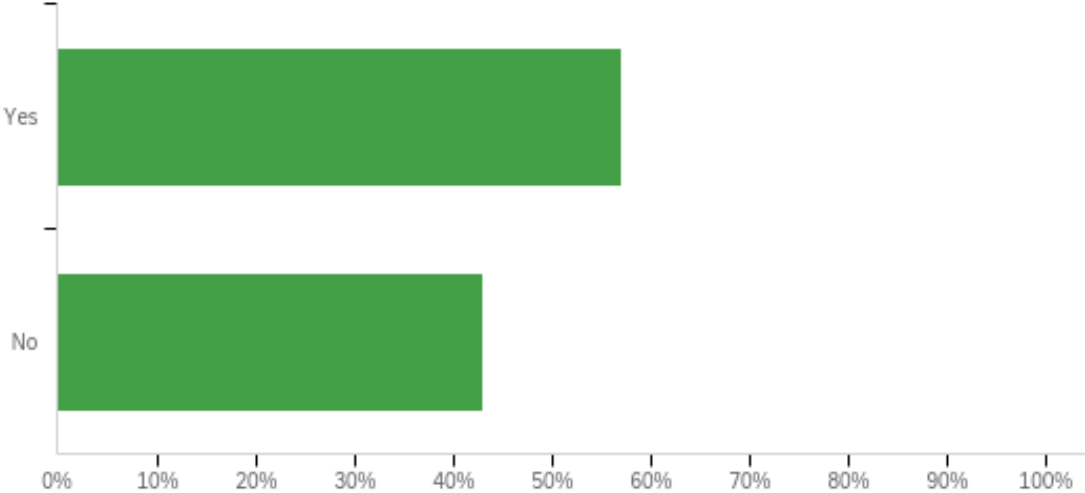
6	Media, Creative Fields, Art	3%
7	Business, Finance, and Administrative Occupations	9%
8	Natural and applied sciences	3%
9	Sales and Customer Service Occupations	6%
10	Trades, transportation, and related production	4%
11	Other industry not listed	6%
	Total	195

Q6 - Do you work full or part-time (defined as less than 30 hours per week) on average?



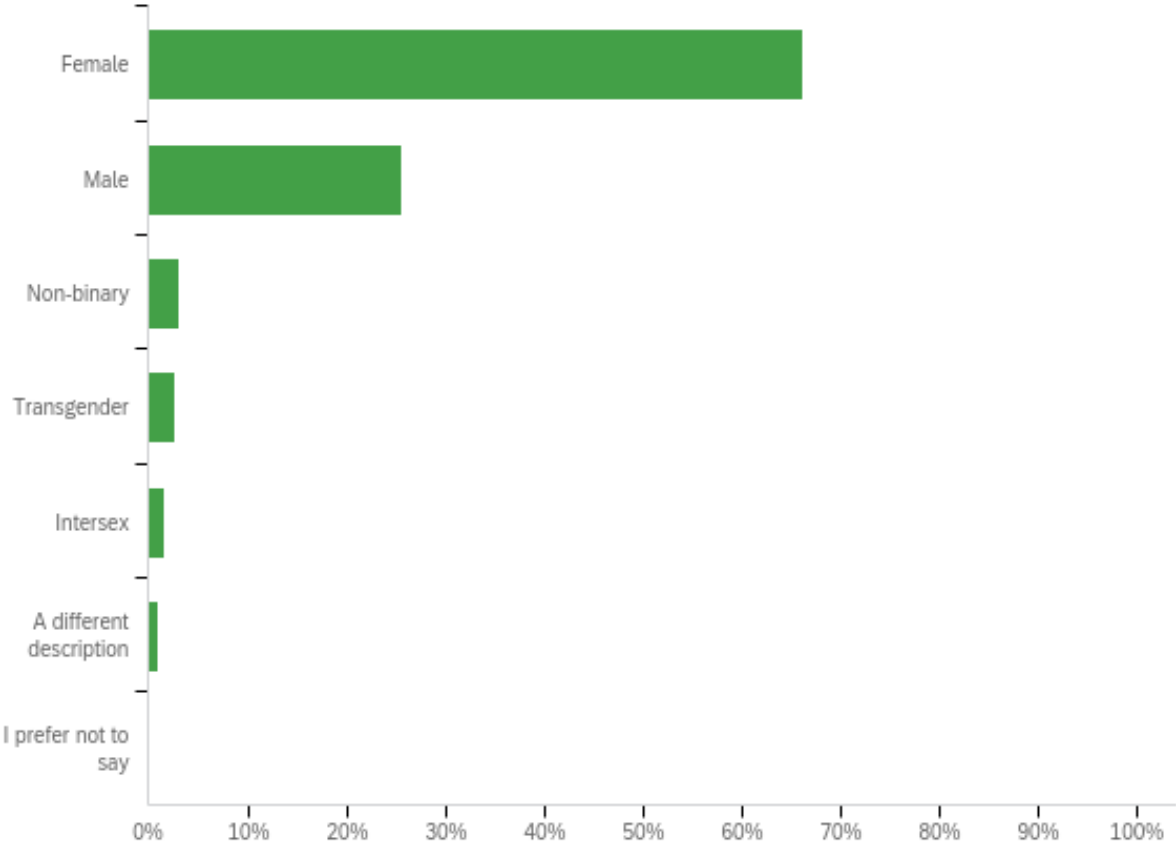
#	Do you work full or part-time (defined as less than 30 hours per week) on average?	Percentage
1	Full-time	85%
2	Part-time	10%
3	Changes from time to time	5%
	Total	194

Q7 - Do you manage other employees as a part of your job?



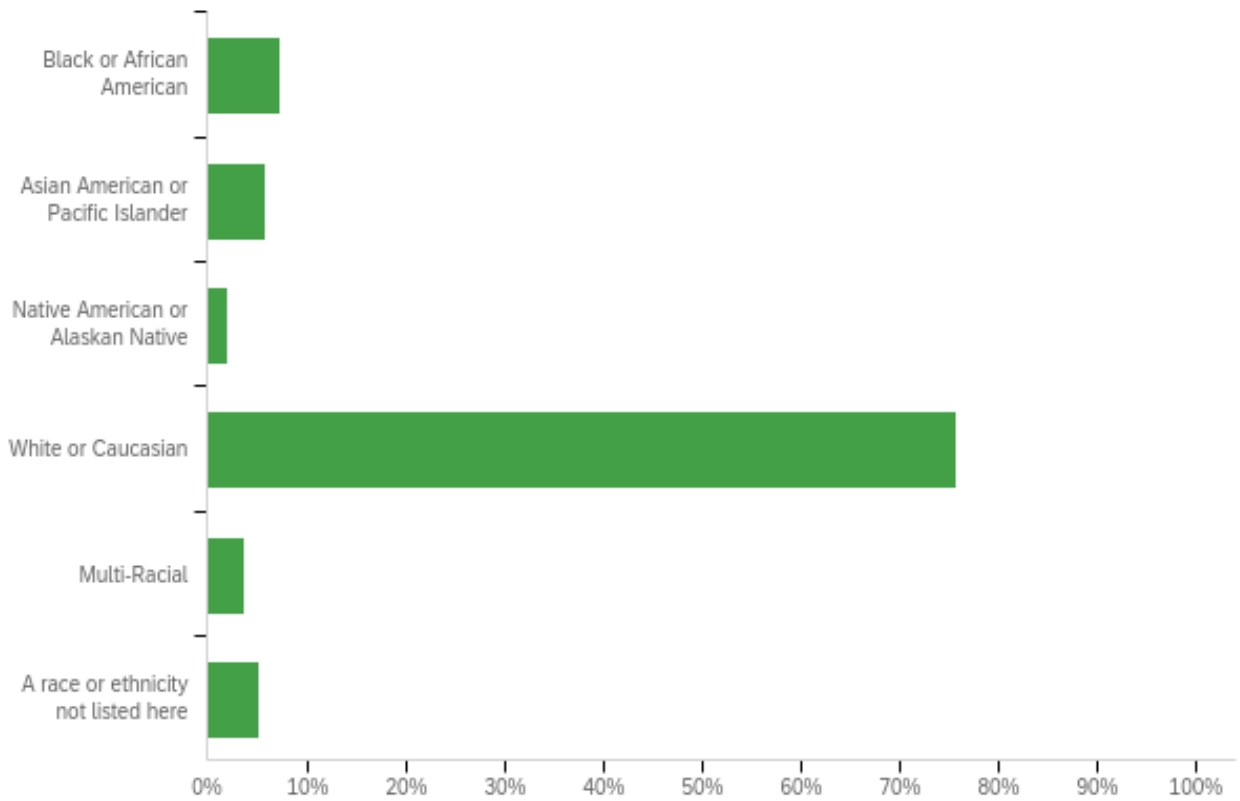
#	Do you manage other employees as a part of your job?	Percentage
1	Yes	57%
2	No	43%
	Total	186

Q8 - Which of the following most accurately describes you?



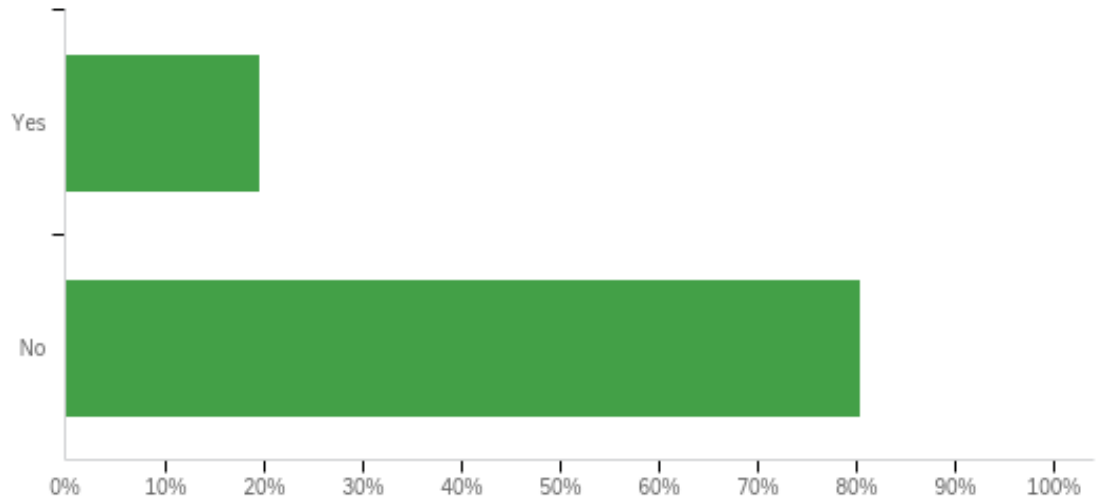
#	Which of the following most accurately describes you?	Percentage
1	Female	66%
2	Male	26%
3	Non-binary	3%
4	Transgender	3%
5	Intersex	2%
6	A different description	1%
7	I prefer not to say	0%
	Total	192

Q9 - Which category best describes your race?



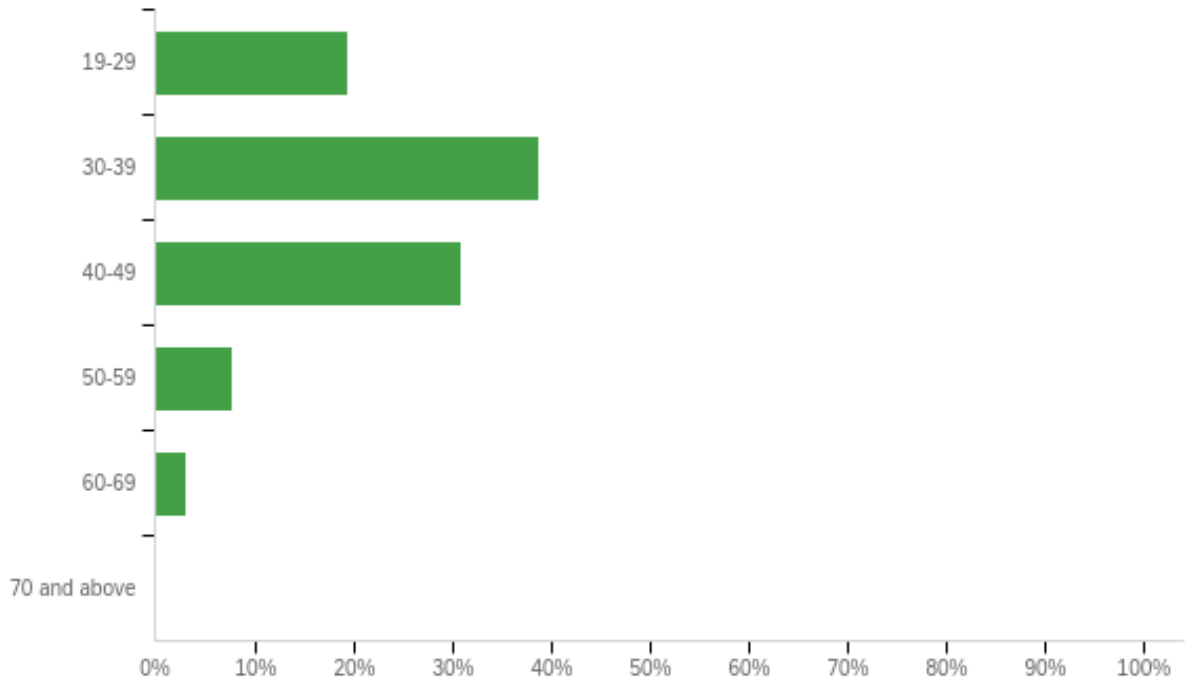
#	Which category best describes your race?	Percentage
1	Black or African American	7%
2	Asian American or Pacific Islander	6%
3	Native American or Alaskan Native	2%
4	White or Caucasian	76%
5	Multi-Racial	4%
6	A race or ethnicity not listed here	5%
	Total	189

Q10 - Do you identify as Hispanic, Latino/a, or Latinx?



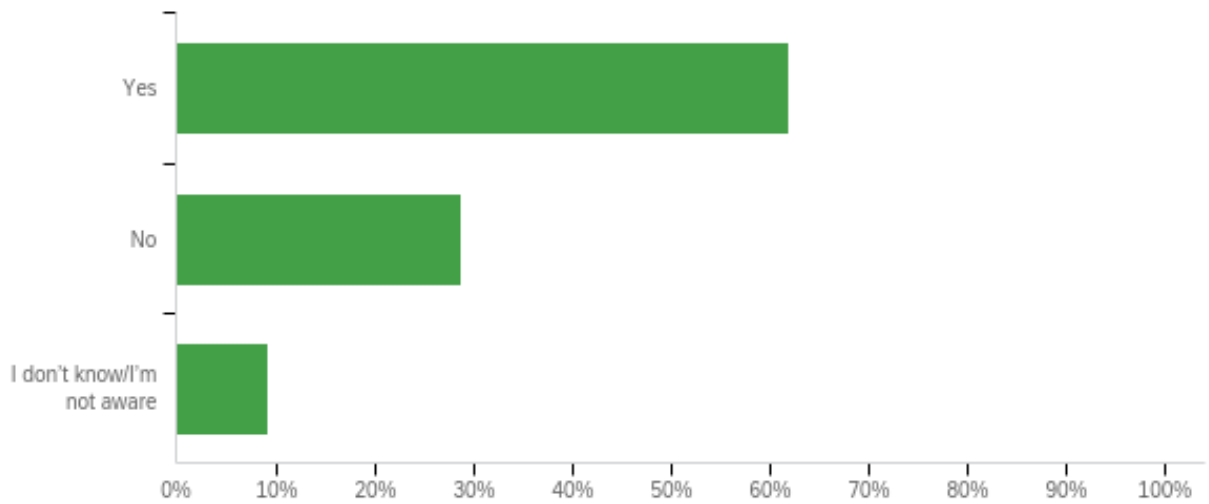
#	Do you identify as Hispanic, Latino/a, or Latinx?	Percentage
1	Yes	20%
2	No	80%
	Total	189

Q11 - What is your age range?



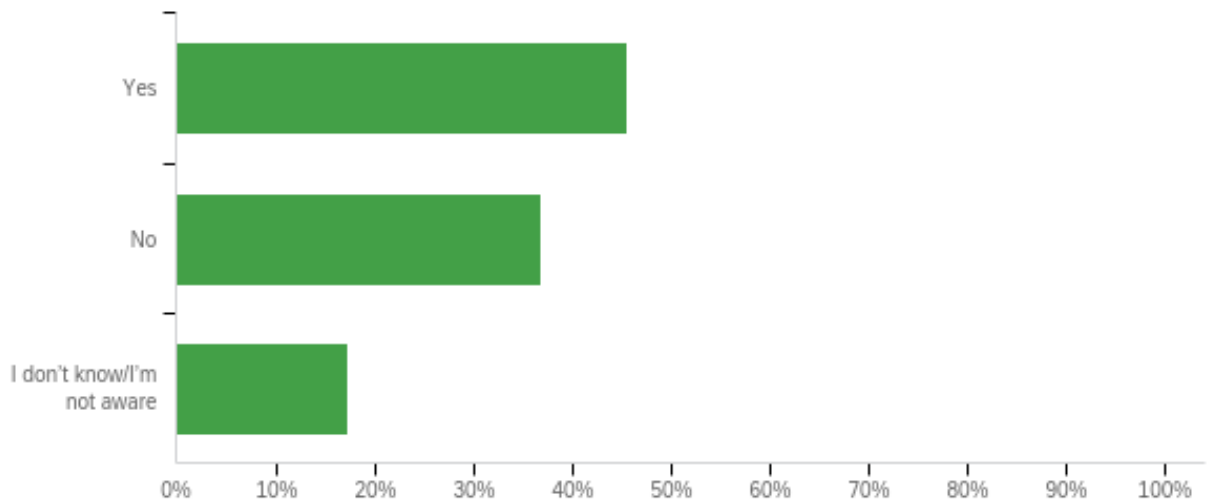
#	What is your age range?	Percentage
1	19-29	19%
2	30-39	39%
3	40-49	31%
4	50-59	8%
5	60-69	3%
6	70 and above	0%
	Total	191

Q13 - Does your organization provide resources and information to all employees about mental health such as: prevalence rates, early warning signs, how to talk with a co-worker you are concerned about, and how to help yourself or a co-worker connect with care?



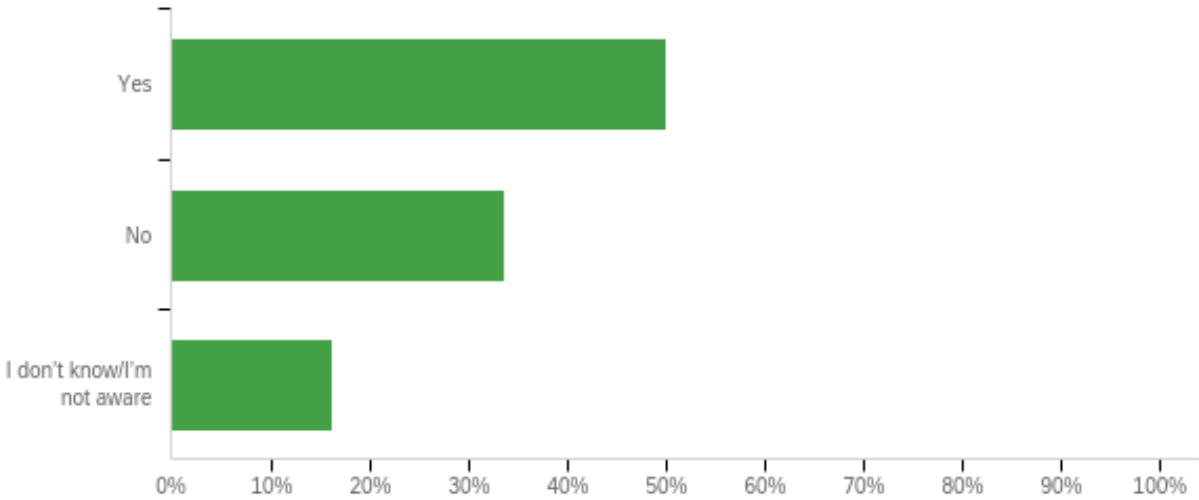
#	Does your organization provide resources and information to all employees about mental health such as: prevalence rates, early warning signs, how to talk with a co-worker you are concerned about, and how to help yourself or a co-worker connect with care?	Percentage
1	Yes	62%
2	No	29%
3	I don't know/I'm not aware	9%
	Total	184

Q14 - Does your organization have clear policies supporting workplace mental health like: allowing employees to take mental health leave, return to work policies after mental health leave and more?



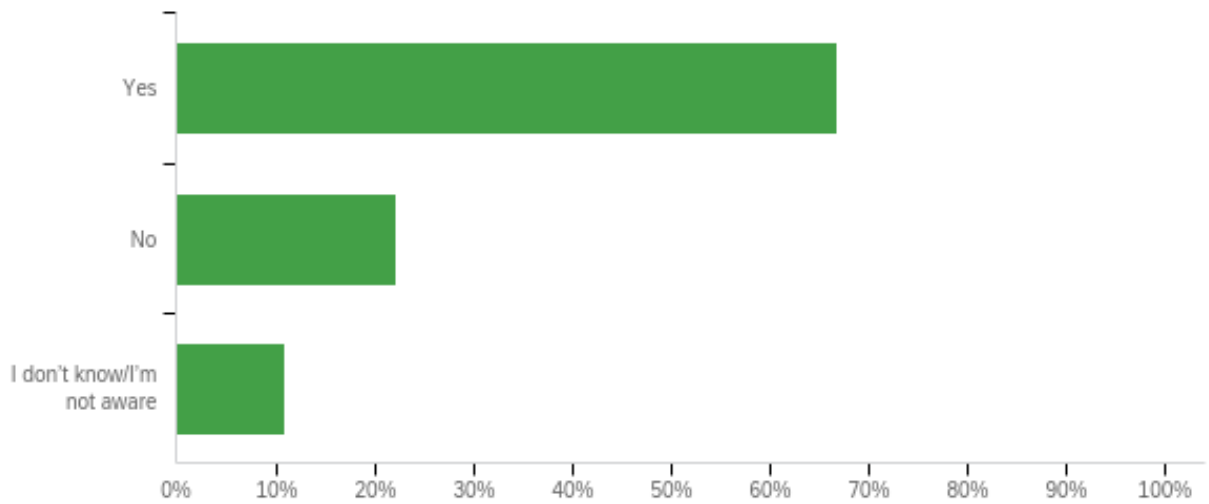
#	Does your organization have clear policies supporting workplace mental health like: allowing employees to take mental health leave, return to work policies after mental health leave and more?	Percentage
1	Yes	46%
2	No	37%
3	I don't know/I'm not aware	17%
	Total	184

Q15 - Does your organization provide opportunities for coworkers to network and support each other regarding mental health issues (through employee resource groups or employee community groups)?



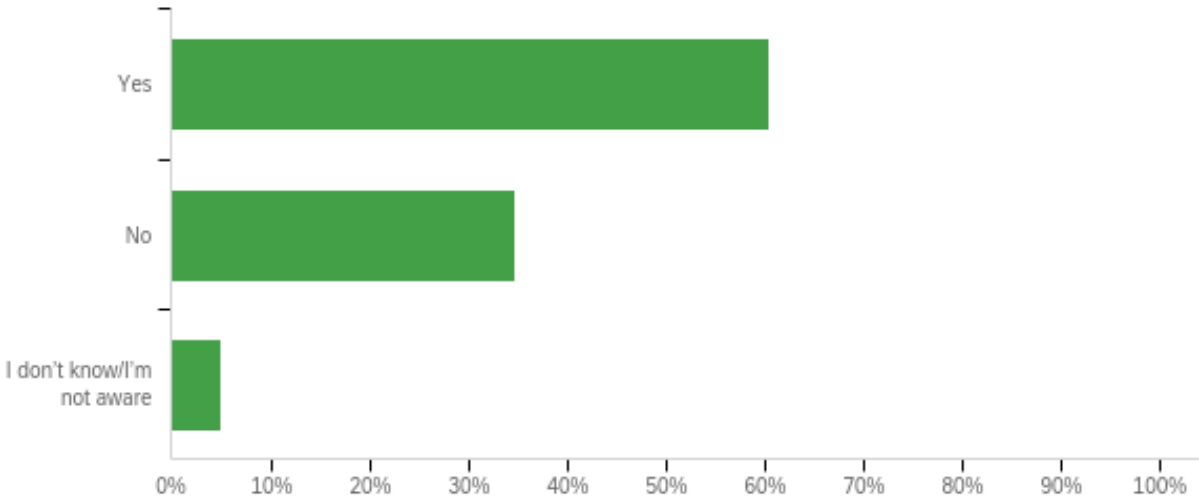
#	Does your organization provide opportunities for coworkers to network and support each other regarding mental health issues (through employee resource groups or employee community groups)?	Percentage
1	Yes	50%
2	No	34%
3	I don't know/I'm not aware	16%
	Total	184

Q16 - Does your organization take steps to make employees aware of available mental health supports and services, either through an Employee Assistance Program or other services?



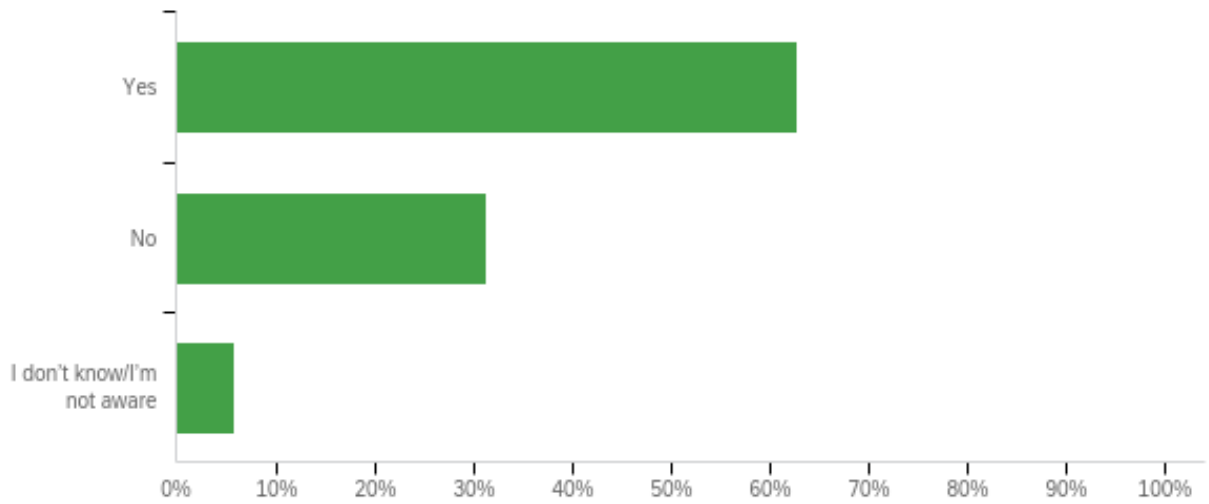
#	Does your organization take steps to make employees aware of available mental health supports and services, either through an Employee Assistance Program or other services?	Percentage
1	Yes	67%
2	No	22%
3	I don't know/I'm not aware	11%
	Total	184

Q17 - Does your organization support stress reduction and stress management through activities such as meditation, mindfulness, exercise, or personal development apps (for things like mental health and sleep)?



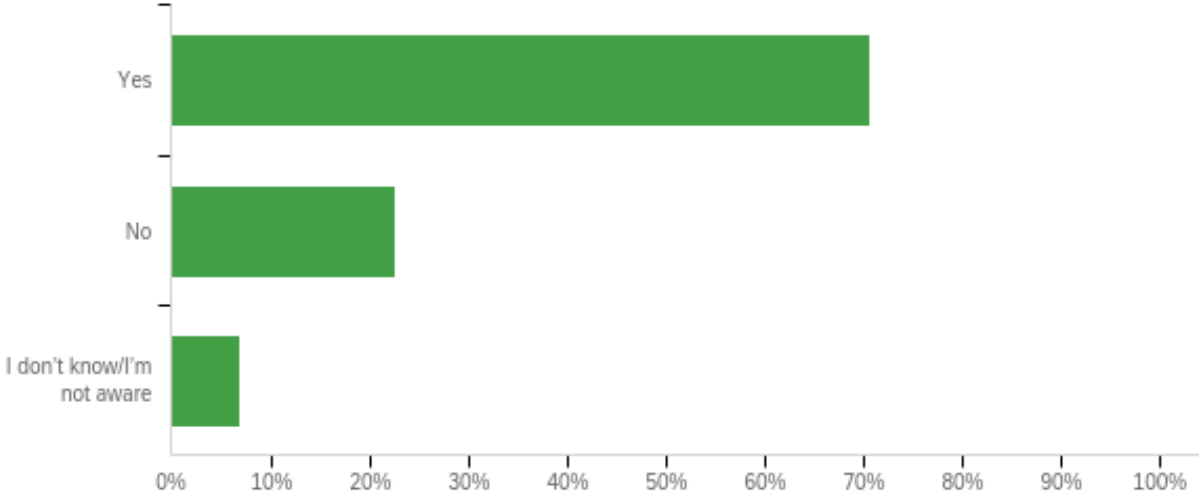
#	Does your organization support stress reduction and stress management through activities such as meditation, mindfulness, exercise, or personal development apps (for things like mental health and sleep)?	Percentage
1	Yes	60%
2	No	35%
3	I don't know/I'm not aware	5%
	Total	184

Q19 - Does your organization provide manager or supervisor training for supporting employees who may be experiencing mental health issues and how to help them?



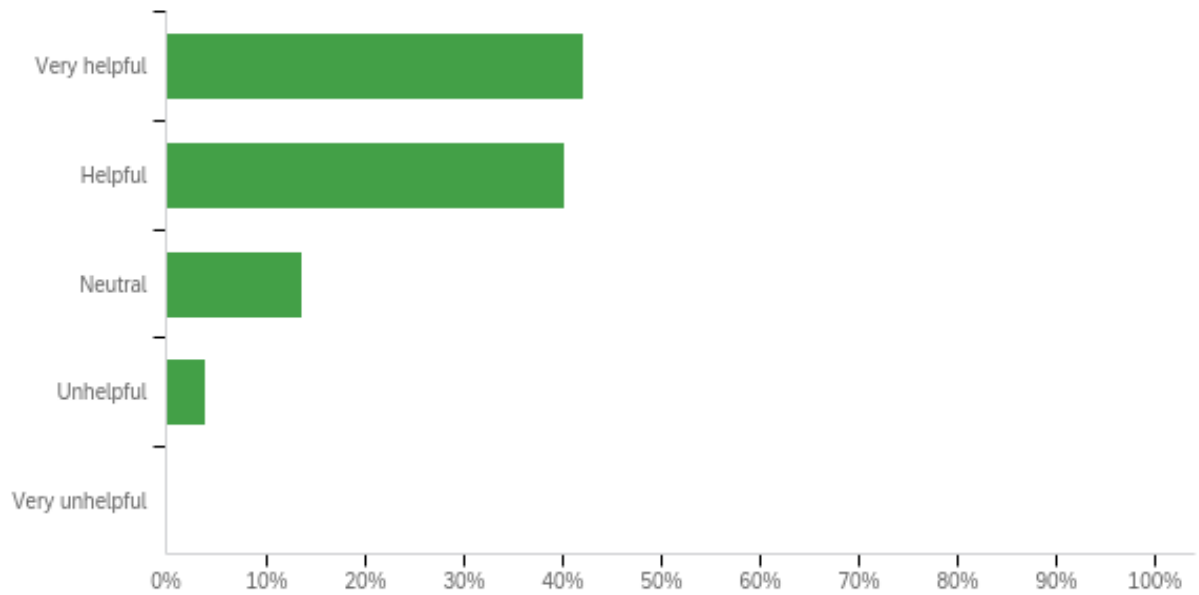
#	Does your organization provide manager or supervisor training for supporting employees who may be experiencing mental health issues and how to help them?	Percentage
1	Yes	63%
2	No	31%
3	I don't know/I'm not aware	6%
	Total	102

Q20 - Do managers have resources available (like an Employee Assistance Program or other supports) to refer employees to who may be experiencing mental health challenges?



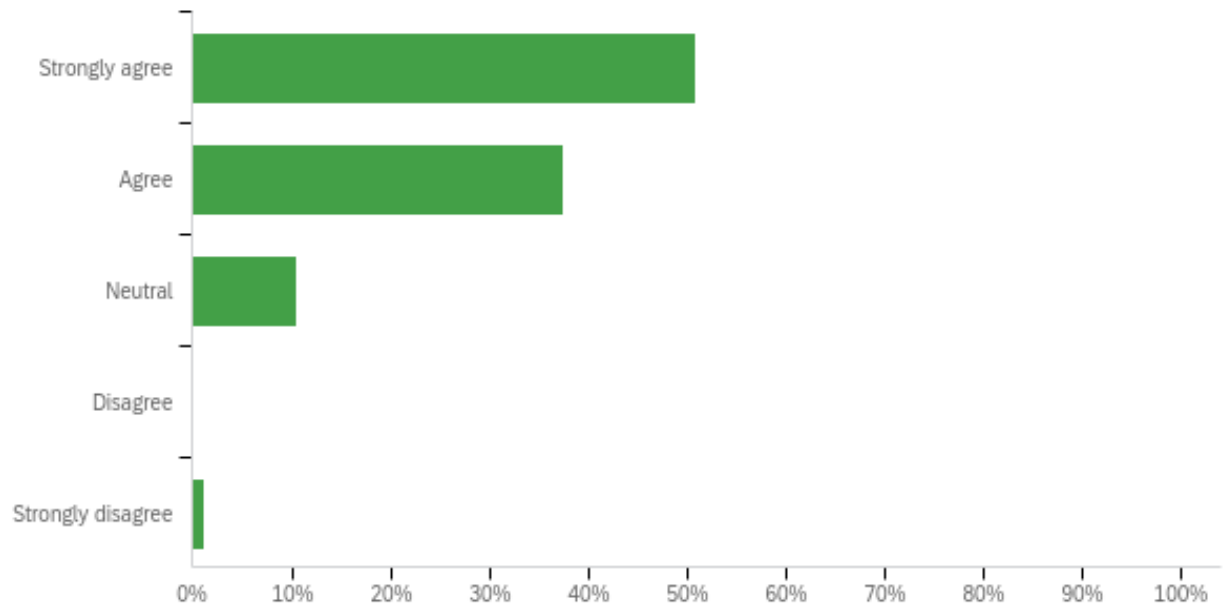
#	Do managers have resources available (like an Employee Assistance Program or other supports) to refer employees to who may be experiencing mental health challenges?	Percentage
1	Yes	71%
2	No	23%
3	I don't know/I'm not aware	7%
	Total	102

Q21 - Please rate how helpful it would be in your role as a manager to have training about topics related to employee mental health and services available for your employees?



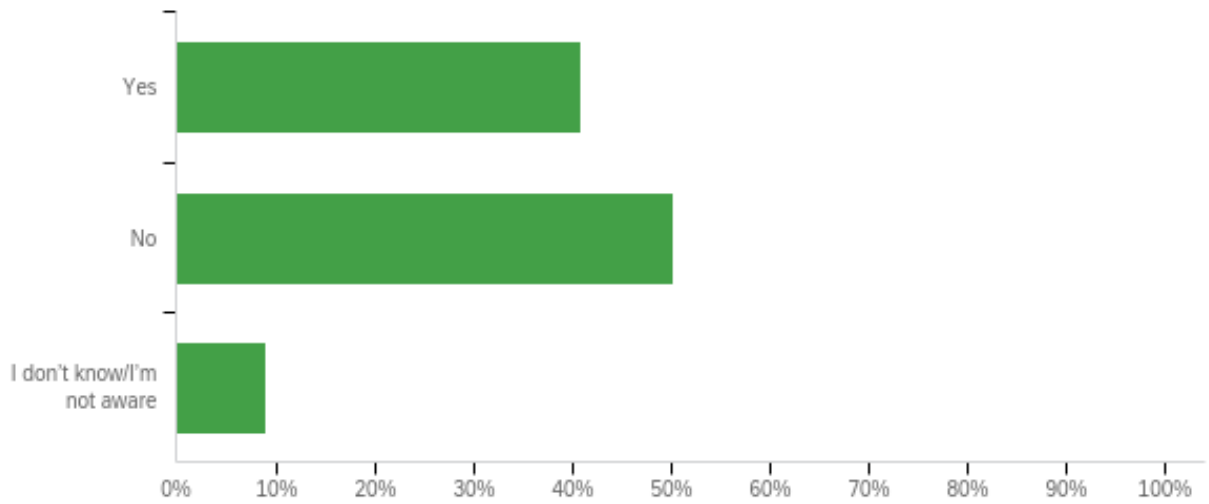
#	Please rate how helpful it would be in your role as a manager to have training about topics related to employee mental health and services available for your employees?	Percentage
1	Very helpful	42%
2	Helpful	40%
3	Neutral	14%
4	Unhelpful	4%
5	Very unhelpful	0%
	Total	102

Q23 - How much do you agree that it's an organization's responsibility to provide support for mental health to employees?



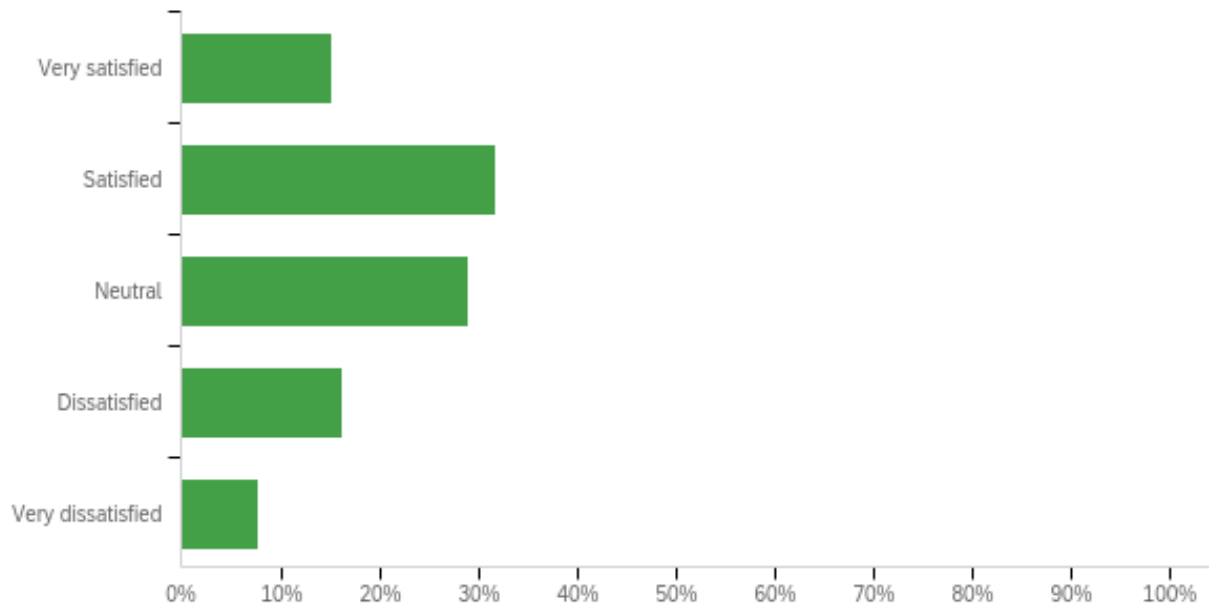
#	How much do you agree that it's an organization's responsibility to provide support for mental health to employees?	Percentage
1	Strongly agree	51%
2	Agree	37%
3	Neutral	11%
4	Disagree	0%
5	Strongly disagree	1%
	Total	179

Q24 - Does your organization ask employees questions about their mental health in surveys or other formal assessments at least once every 12 months?



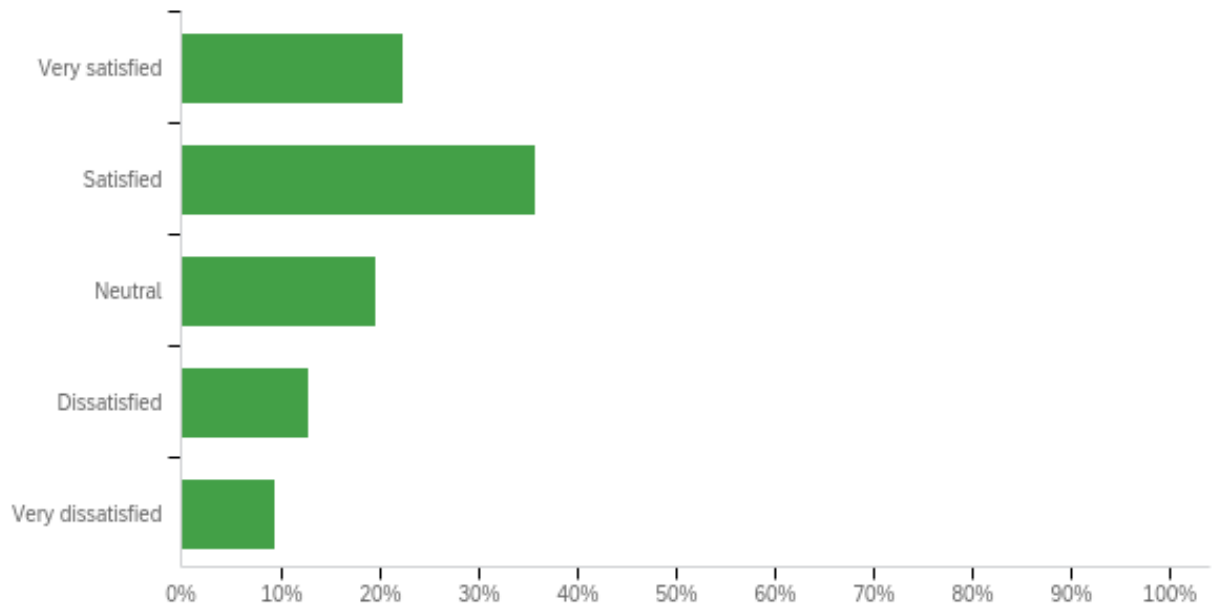
#	Does your organization ask employees questions about their mental health in surveys or other formal assessments at least once every 12 months?	Percentage
1	Yes	41%
2	No	50%
3	I don't know/I'm not aware	9%
	Total	179

Q25 - Please rate your satisfaction with access to the mental health support you want or need using your organization's resources?



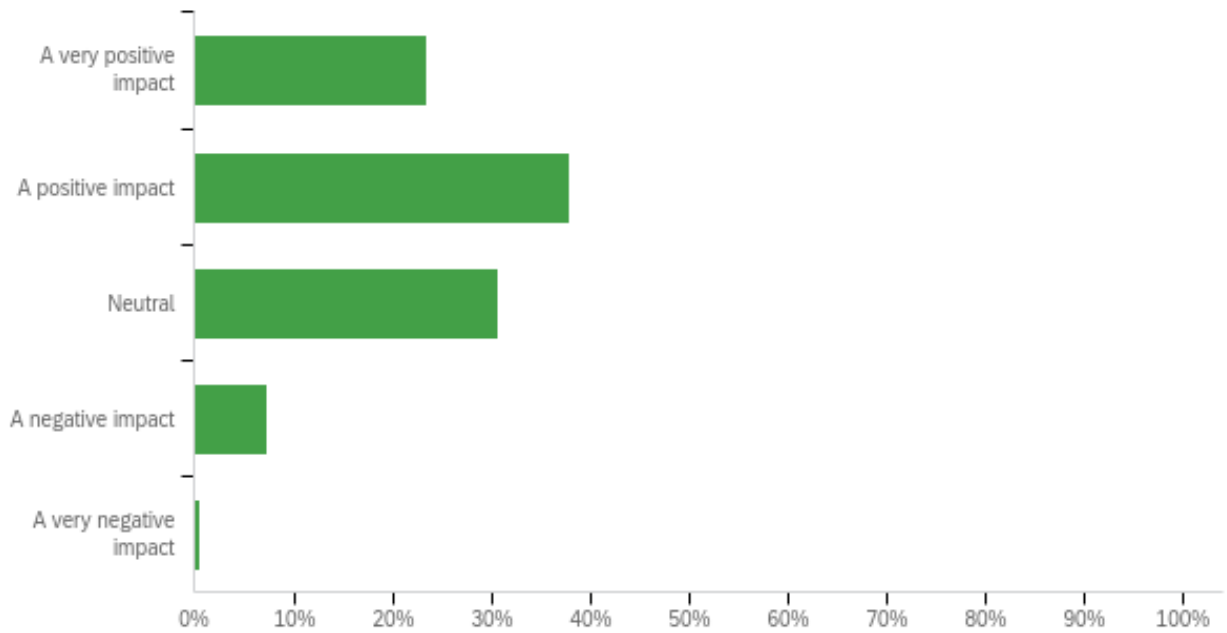
#	Please rate your satisfaction with access to the mental health support you want or need using your organization's resources?	Percentage
1	Very satisfied	15%
2	Satisfied	32%
3	Neutral	29%
4	Dissatisfied	16%
5	Very dissatisfied	8%
	Total	179

Q26 - Please rate your satisfaction with how supportive the leadership of your organization is regarding employee mental health.



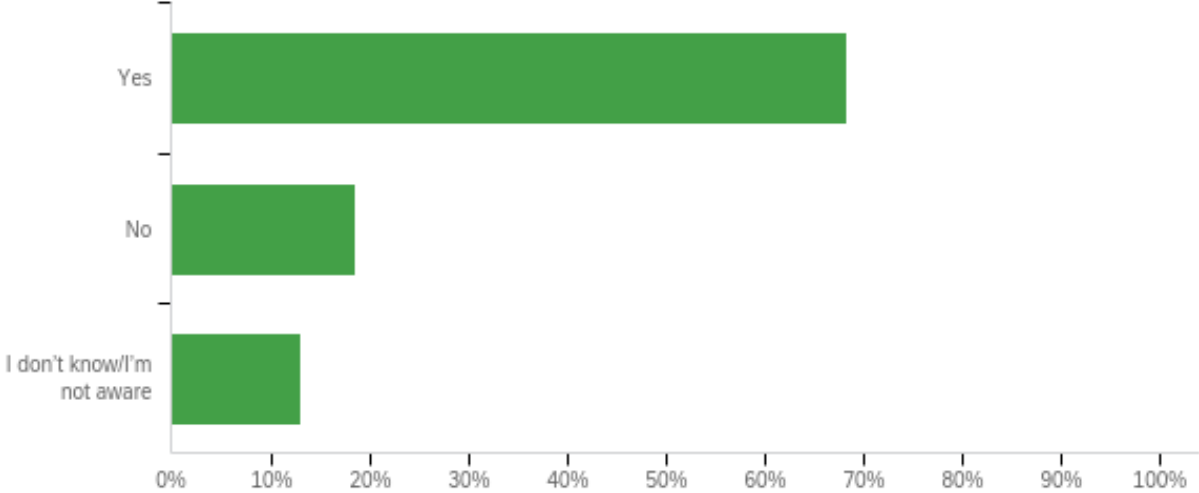
#	Please rate your satisfaction with how supportive the leadership of your organization is regarding employee mental health.	Percentage
1	Very satisfied	22%
2	Satisfied	36%
3	Neutral	20%
4	Dissatisfied	13%
5	Very dissatisfied	9%
	Total	179

Q27 - How much of an impact do you believe accessing mental health services through your organization could affect opportunities for advancement or promotion?



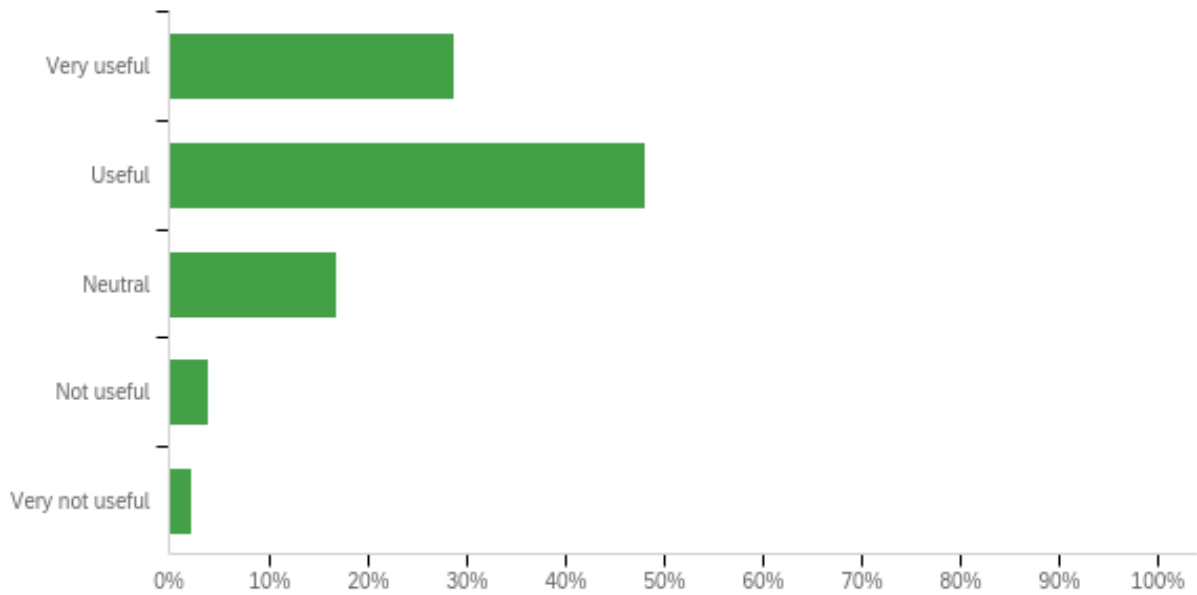
#	How much of an impact do you believe accessing mental health services through your organization could affect opportunities for advancement or promotion?	Percentage
1	A very positive impact	23%
2	A positive impact	38%
3	Neutral	31%
4	A negative impact	7%
5	A very negative impact	1%
	Total	179

Q28 - Does your organization have a diversity program that addresses inclusion and belonging in the workplace?



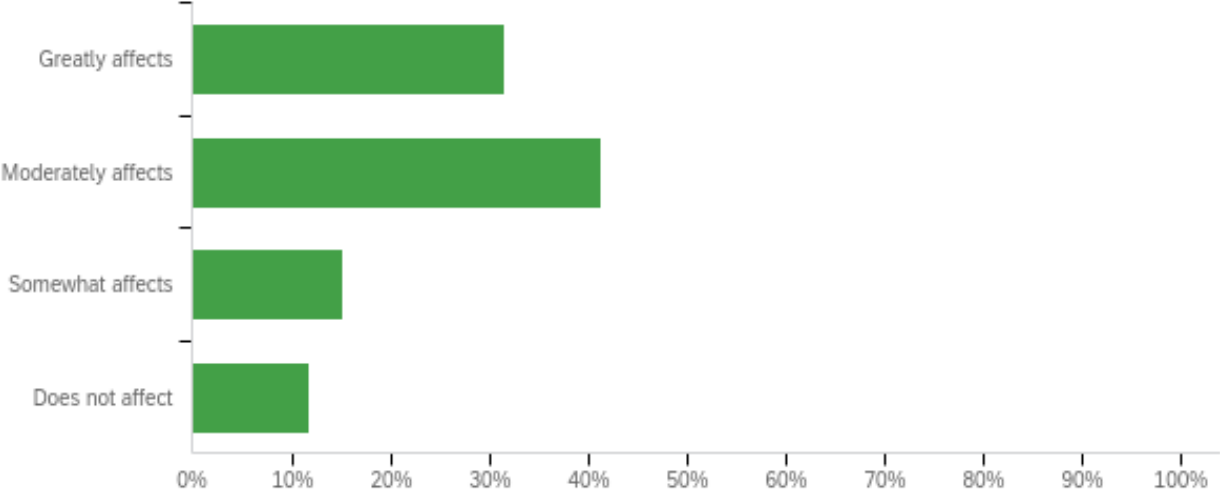
#	Does your organization have a diversity program that addresses inclusion and belonging in the workplace?	Percentage
1	Yes	68%
2	No	19%
3	I don't know/I'm not aware	13%
	Total	177

Q29 - How useful would it be for your organization to provide apps that support your mental health (such as therapy, sleep, meditation, or personal development)?



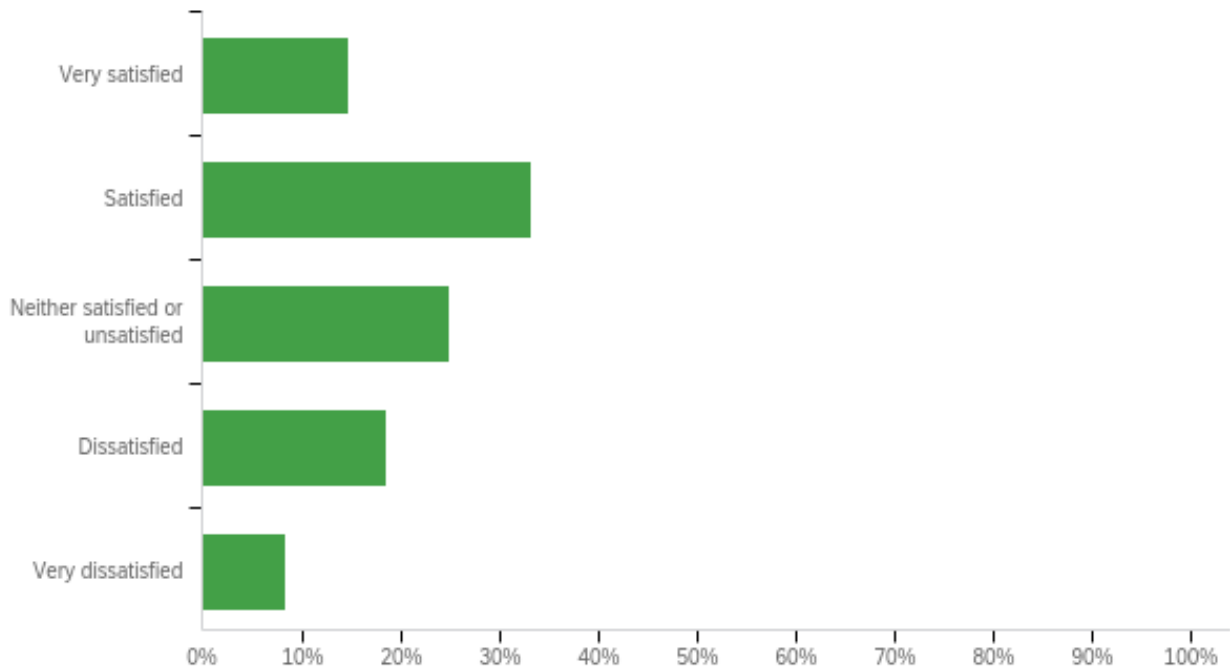
#	How useful would it be for your organization to provide apps that support your mental health (such as therapy, sleep, meditation, or personal development)?	Percentage
1	Very useful	29%
2	Useful	48%
3	Neutral	17%
4	Not useful	4%
5	Very not useful	2%
	Total	177

Q30 - How much does your workplace’s approach to mental health affect your desire to remain at the organization as an employee?



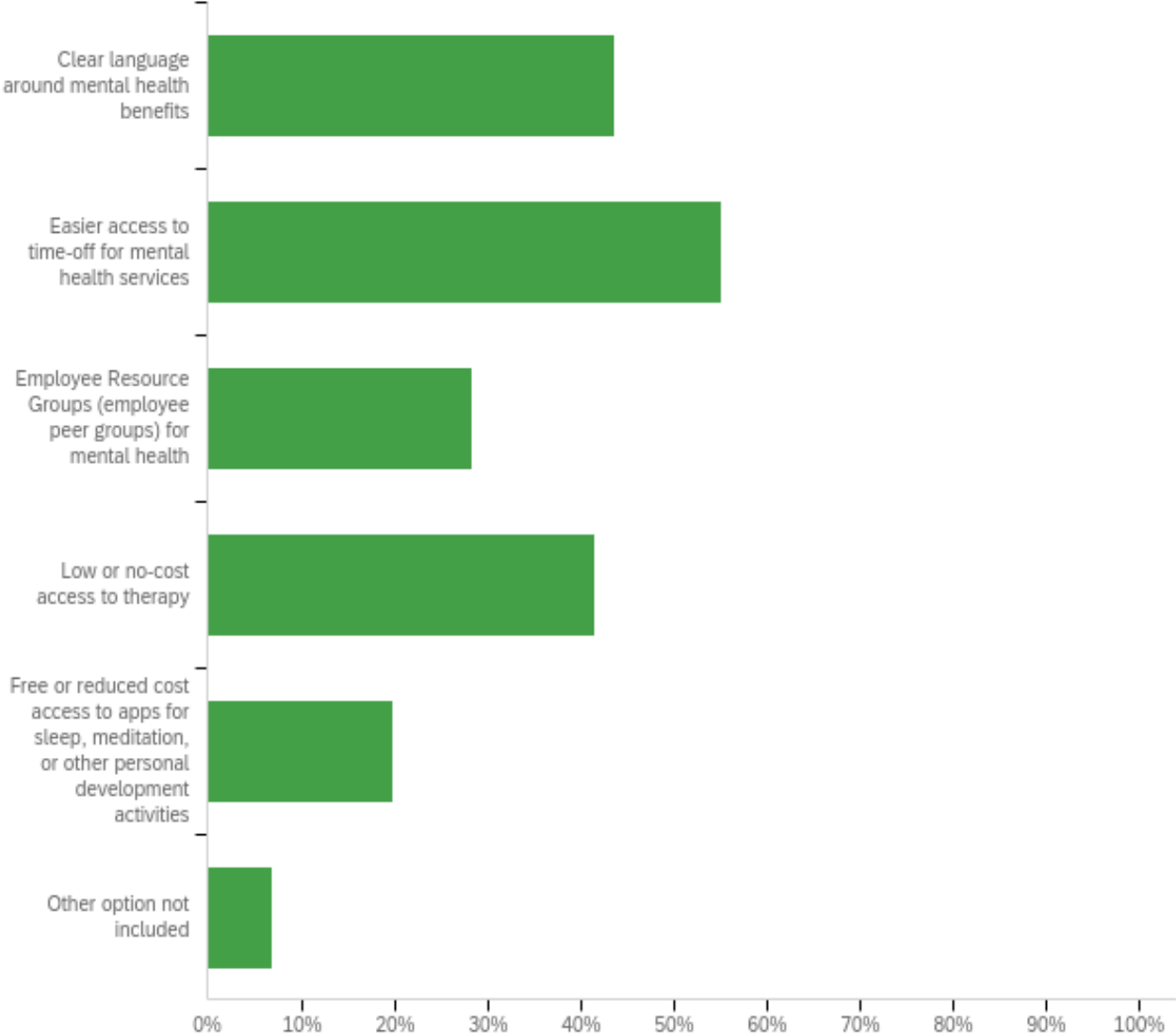
#	How much does your workplace’s approach to mental health affect your desire to remain at the organization as an employee?	Percentage
1	Greatly affects	32%
2	Moderately affects	41%
3	Somewhat affects	15%
4	Does not affect	12%
	Total	177

Q31 - How satisfied are you with your organization’s approach to mental health in your workplace?



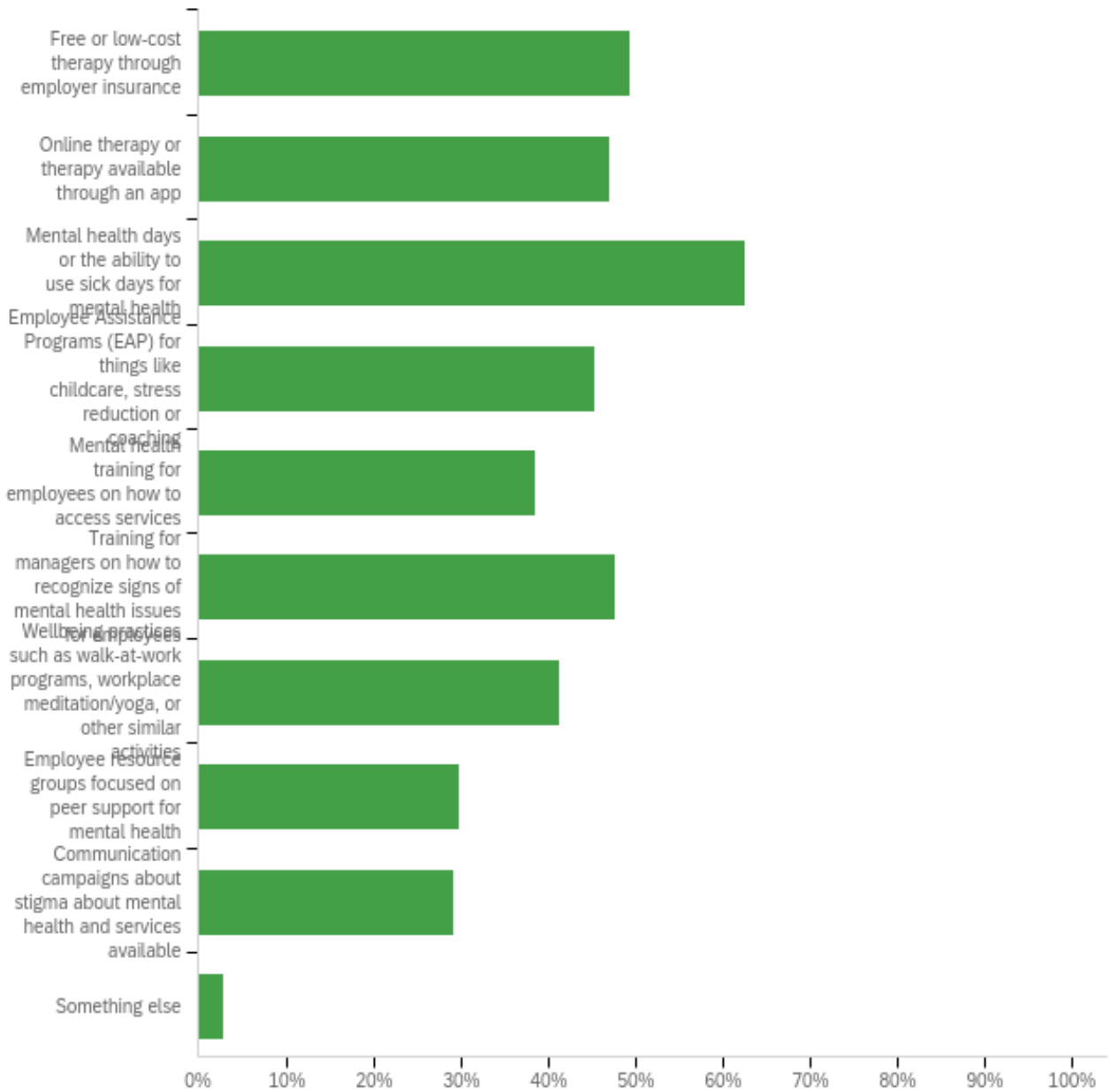
#	How satisfied are you with your organization’s approach to mental health in your workplace?	Percentage
1	Very satisfied	15%
2	Satisfied	33%
3	Neither satisfied or unsatisfied	25%
4	Dissatisfied	19%
5	Very dissatisfied	8%
	Total	177

Q32 - What changes could your workplace make to improve mental health support for its employees? (Select your top two)



#	What changes could your workplace make to improve mental health support for its employees? (Select your top two)	Percentage
1	Clear language around mental health benefits	22%
2	Easier access to time-off for mental health services	28%
3	Employee Resource Groups (employee peer groups) for mental health	15%
4	Low or no-cost access to therapy	21%
5	Free or reduced cost access to apps for sleep, meditation, or other personal development activities	10%
6	Other option not included	3%

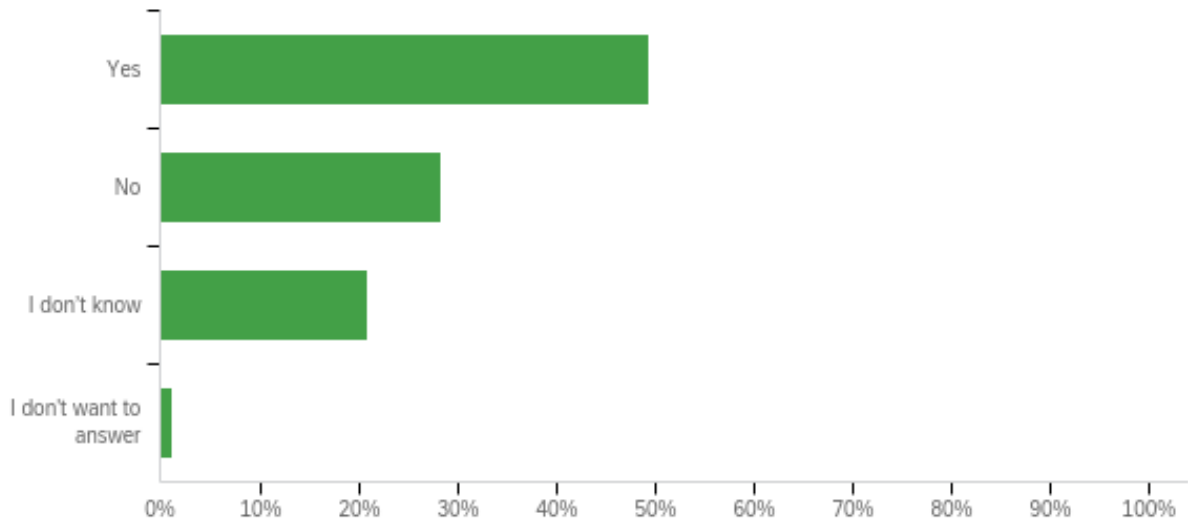
**Q34 - Which mental health services or supports do you feel would be beneficial to you?
(Select all that apply)**



#	Which mental health services or supports do you feel would be beneficial to you? (Select all that apply)	Percentage
1	Free or low-cost therapy through employer insurance	13%
2	Online therapy or therapy available through an app	12%
3	Mental health days or the ability to use sick days for mental health	16%

4	Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) for things like childcare, stress reduction or coaching	12%
5	Mental health training for employees on how to access services	10%
6	Training for managers on how to recognize signs of mental health issues for employees	12%
7	Wellbeing practices such as walk-at-work programs, workplace meditation/yoga, or other similar activities	10%
8	Employee resource groups focused on peer support for mental health	8%
9	Communication campaigns about stigma about mental health and services available	7%
10	Something else	1%
	Total	686

Q36 - Do you believe there is workplace racism that impacts employees' mental health?



#	Do you believe there is workplace racism that impacts employees' mental health?	Percentage
1	Yes	49%
2	No	28%
3	I don't know	21%
4	I don't want to answer	1%
	Total	176

Q37 - In what ways do you think racism in the workplace impacts employees' mental health? Please describe.

In what ways do you think racism in the workplace impacts employees' mental health? Please describe.

We have very few POC employees, and they definitely get treated differently by some managers.

Feeling out casted, insecure and lonely. Can cause depression.

Pressure placed on BIPOC colleagues to do more, serve more and not show any "weak" points

Racism in the workplace affects inclusion and the ability to assimilate on mission and vision of a company

I live in central Pennsylvania. Even just the language people use to describe people of color is appalling. Any non white person is treated as a curiosity. Those that are not overtly racist have the social tact of a child who has never seen someone who does not look like them.

implicit bias impacting promotion potential for people of color

Employees who experience systemic racism are impacted by less access to resources within a system that discriminates against them, they have ongoing additional stress from working within structures of systemic racism, and the resources and therapists available to them are often not tailored to their specific needs.

Undue stress Frustration over unfair practices and treatment and Overall dissatisfaction with the work place that can lead to anger, self-esteem issues, depression

Racism causes employees to not feel valued at their job. This can lead to not only the decline in their mental health, but the quality of work they provide.

When it becomes the norm it makes it hard for one to believe that racism is not the norm and makes it hard to think of anything different.

Racism negatively impacts employee's mental health because they can truly never get away from it. Racism is always there and you are unable to avoid it, even within the workplace

When an individual is segregated based on his color, he/she is bound to feel lonely and this can result to underperformance and depression.

Racism can cause symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression at work. These symptoms make it difficult to perform our duties and tasks every day on the job. When we leave work these symptoms carryover and negatively impact our day to day functioning with family, friends and our community

Repeated daily stressors increase stress which leads to poorer health outcomes.

There are more requirements for black people to exist comfortably in the workplace because the rules and requirements are set up to accommodate middle class white men and their families. Much of the racism is systemic rather than overt interpersonal. Passive aggressive behavior is promoted, which obscures all communication and meaning.

Racism in the workplace perpetuates divisiveness and attempts to suppress or silence minority and out-groups in the workplace. Racism in the workplace creates chaos and conflict that stimulates an unhealthy workplace. These unhealthy workplaces can further exacerbate one's mental health if not addressed by leadership.

I feel like in the IT world, you're considered smart if you belong to certain ethnicities, such as Asian or South Asian

Microaggressions are a huge part of the impact.

If they racist you by your cast or colour

My workplace is extremely lacking in diversity... I could see a situation where new hire(s) could be put off by the lack of diversity. I also think subconscious racism and implicit bias is present everyone and it impacts others more than many people recognize. We talk about how race impacts the system... but do so from a place of privilege.

For me, negatively. It is difficult to be happy in a workplace if your coworkers exhibit a trait (racism) that violates your core values. To be clear, I think racism exists in many workplaces but this is not a direct criticism of my own office. This is a general observation.

As a white woman, the trauma of racism is second-hand, but it still impacts my mental health. I hurt for my colleagues who are subject to racist remarks or treatment in the courts (some have even been mistaken for criminal defendants rather than lawyers). I also experience a significant amount of trauma due to the helplessness I often feel in the face of the racism that affects my clients' treatment, and even their punishment.

When an employee is not supported at work

A factor that employers have been ignoring

I am the only Caucasian female among mama POC females. There is allot of talk downing white people and discussions about how oppressed there are. It attracts my mental health Because it can be constant but it isn't seen as a problem because I'm white and even though they like me, whites as a whole are the problem.

Can create stressful unprofessional and damaging work environment. Create fear of retaliation for speaking up.

Exclusion to talk

It's demoralizing

It makes them feel more isolated, depressed, anxious, and less likely to engage with coworkers.

Family conflicts, job burnout, underpaid salaries

safety problem

With the development of society, people can not keep up with the speed, the psychological pressure is great

Pressure at home, social development is too fast

Racial discrimination causes employees to work slowly

Company environment, mental health, occupational stress

Duality of pressure effects

Added stress, anger, frustration. Can lead to symptoms of anxiety or depression.

Workplace depression

Racism is present in every aspect of life. The workplace is another part of life where racism exists. Racism is a constant assault on mental and physical wellbeing of people of color and also negatively impacts white people.

This does not pertain to our organization as we are very inclusive and promote and embrace diversity, but I would imagine that if a racial minority felt they worked in a racist environment, or one that protected or overlooked racist or micro aggressive behavior it would lead to a negative and mentally unfit workplace--for all (who care).

Every aspect of people, employment, education, equal access to health care

Perceived lack of opportunity for professional growth.

Racism in the workplace ostracizes individuals, leading to isolation and rejection and it creates feelings of exclusion.

Work motivation

People of color are disparately impacted when they face discrimination / micro aggressions that don't allow them to fully show up as their authentic selves.

Social status and day-to-day economics

Certain races are stereotyped and employees or friends think it's ok to make comments even though they are unaware of what it's like to be a minority causing more undue stress. If they concentrate on numbers more than helping others.

It also unfairly advantages individuals belonging to socially and politically dominant racial groups

Verbal sarcasm in everyday communication

Depression, anxiety, stress

I fear that my URiM colleagues face microaggressions (and maybe some that aren't micro) from other staff and patients that cause them additional stress and anger

Its effects range from daily interpersonal interactions shaped by race to race-based opportunities for good education, housing, employment, etc

Creates a hostile work environment that fosters anxiety at work and anticipation before going to work that can build over time. There could also eventually be an experienced depression if the employee does not feel supported at work with what they are going through and feels powerless to change it.

It creates low morale which negatively impacts the mission and goals of the organization. Additionally, it affects retention and leads to less representation of minorities in leadership positions.

Differential consequences

Often do things that don't make sense

Do irrelevant work

Important work is never given to me

Discrimination in everyday life

Employees of color do not see themselves represented in leadership, which can be extremely disheartening, as is lack of ownership for microaggressions

Racism is oppression and violence.

Generally speaking, microaggressions and white savior complex exist everywhere. Maintaining professionalism in the face of that must be tiring. I don't know of any specific instances overt racism in my org, but know coworkers, who I imagine are insufferable to people of color in our org.

For those who are being discriminated against, I'd feel that their mental health would be impacted negatively.

The microaggressions and full on aggressions Black oriole and other people of color deal with in the workplace are very detrimental to people's mental health.

I believe there is implicit and at times explicit racism in every workplace in America. I believe racism is a public health threat that affects millions of people.

I think it exhausts people. Having to code switch is its own full-time job. Racism is abuse.

Noticing different treatments towards me base on my accent or the fact that I'm not white. Micro aggressions.