

While Most Workers Admit They Struggle With Their Mental Health, Disclosing Mental Health Disorders To Employers Is Still An Issue

The Bowman Foundation for Workplace Equity and Mental Wellness conducted a survey on the current state of mental health in the workplace and found that most American workers admit that they struggle with their mental health.

Acknowledging Mental Health Struggles and Seeking Treatment



These numbers are encouraging as a strong majority of people are more open about their mental health struggles and are seeking mental health treatment which was something that many people have avoided in the past due to stigma and other concerns.

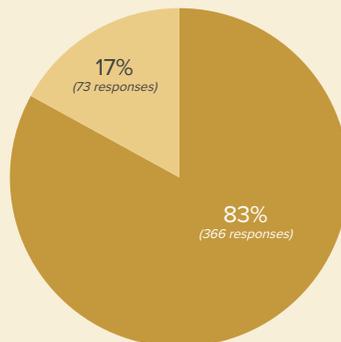
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Workplace Equity and Mental Wellness

According to the survey, 71% of respondents have suffered from a mental health disorder, and 83% have used Mental Health Services.

Have you ever used any formal mental health-related services?

For example: receiving counseling, guidance, or help with something in your life from a professional or semi-professional provider.

TOTAL RESPONSES=439

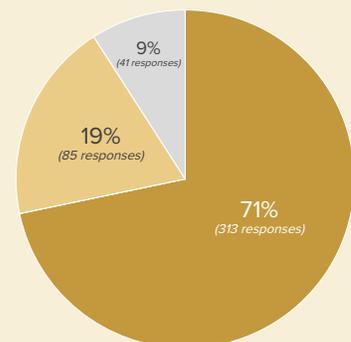


● YES ● NO

Do you suffer (or have you suffered) from a mental health disorder?

For example: depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, eating disorders, or addictive behaviors.

TOTAL RESPONSES=439



● YES ● NO ● NOT SURE

Most Workers Are Reluctant to Disclose a Mental Health Disorder to Employers

Although people, in general, are more about their mental health struggles and are seeking treatment, they are still reluctant to share their mental health struggles with their employers.

Please share your experience after disclosing your diagnosis with your employer.

“My direct leader at the time actually helped me get into therapy. [I] talked about my diagnosis in an interview for a position I currently hold and got the job!”

“I was able to self-identify as a person with a disability [...]. My immediate supervisor was incredibly supportive throughout this process and even though I identify as a person with a disability, I was recently promoted to a higher-level role.”

“I feel mental health is not taken seriously as physical illness which both can become debilitating.”

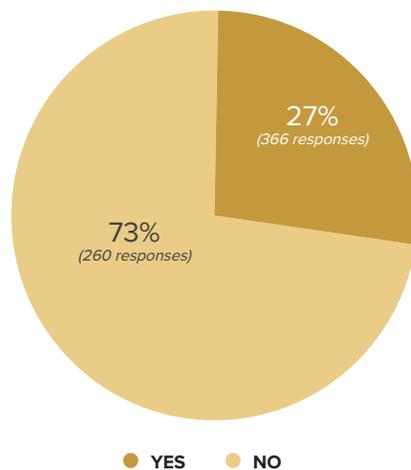
“Employers do nothing. They encourage you to go to counseling, but they don’t really make any concessions.”

“Verbally supportive, but no acknowledgment of accommodations or possibilities for reworking goals in the meantime. Then, after a few months, I was let go.”

“There was a lot of ‘wow,’ I support you but no real work structures or processes that indicated true support.”

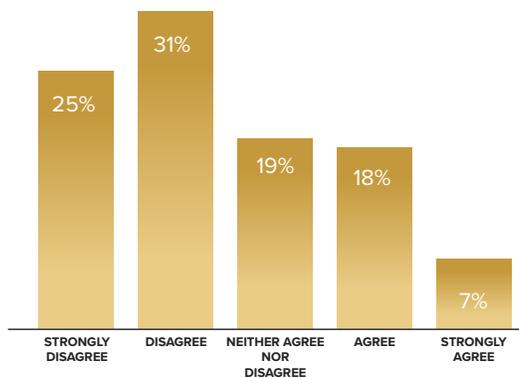
Out of the 354 respondents that disclosed a mental health diagnosis, only 27% have disclosed a mental health diagnosis to an employer, and only 25% would feel comfortable disclosing a mental health diagnosis in the future.

Have you disclosed a mental health diagnosis to your employer?



How do you feel about the following statement?

If I were to be diagnosed with a mental health disorder in the future, I would feel comfortable disclosing my diagnosis to my employer.



The reluctance to disclose mental health struggles to employers comes with good reason, especially for black employees

Compared to Black respondents, White respondents were more likely to say that they suffer(ed) from a mental health disorder (80% vs. 59%) and were over 2x as likely to have disclosed a mental health diagnosis to their employer (35% vs. 16%)*.

** Note: 15% of Black respondents were 'not sure' if they suffered from a mental health disorder, compared to only 5% of White respondents*

Of those who disclosed a mental health diagnosis, Whites were least likely to have an employer retaliate against them (11%). Blacks were three times as likely as Whites to face retaliation (35%).

The vast majority of comments about the current state of mental health in the workplace were related to instances of retaliation or fear of retaliation from their employers.

Recurring themes of retaliation included:

- Reduced job assignments
- Less visibility on projects
- Unfavorable performance evaluations due to attendance
- Micromanagement after disclosure
- Isolation
- Termination

If you've been retaliated against for disclosing your mental health diagnosis, please describe your experience.

"I was labeled with a 'bad attitude' during the pandemic because I had to spend half of my time trying to advocate for my mental health."

"When I went back to work, they literally isolated me from everyone."

"I feel I've been excluded."

"Removed from all high-visibility projects."

"During my performance review, I was told that I missed work too much, even though I had a doctor's diagnosis." to use minor mistakes against me for termination."

"Placing demands on me [that] weren't not required by others, removing support, disclosing my diagnosis to other employees."

"PTSD was disclosed, and I got moved out of my role and my job was eliminated 7 mos later after 24 years."

What resources, benefits, and commitment do you need from your workplace to support your mental well-being at work?

"The option to have a reduced work week."

"Mental health days separate from PTO, vacation, and sick."

"An understanding that people who are hospitalized for mental health disorders need support, like regular check-ins on how they are doing."

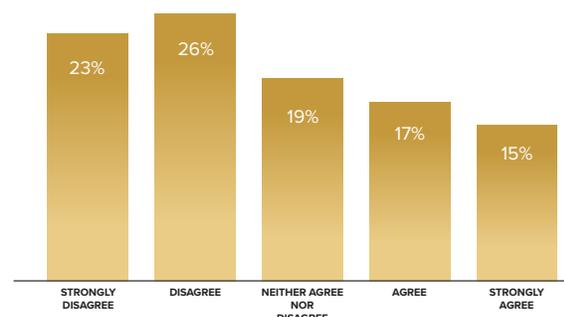
"Feeling supported in my work; believing that I can do the work; free of judgment and biases; feeling accepted and a sense of belonging."

Support from Employer After Disclosing a Mental Health Disorder

About half (49%) of all respondents felt they did not receive adequate support from their employer.

How do you feel about the following statement?

After disclosing my diagnosis, I received adequate support, resources, and accommodations from my employer.





Many employers struggle with giving adequate support to their employees who struggle with mental health disorders. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and Family Medical Leaves are typically the only resources employers provide. While these resources are helpful, they do not assist the employer and employee engage in productive dialogue about what day-to-day resources the employee needs to thrive at work with their mental health disorder.

-- says Bowman

By Demographics



Disclosure By Gender

Women were more likely to have used services, suffer from a mental health disorder, and disclose a mental health disorder to their employer than men. (90% confidence).

Men are significantly more likely to feel comfortable disclosing a future mental health diagnosis to their employer. (39% vs. 22% for women).



Disclosure By Tenure

Those in entry-level positions were more likely to say they suffer(ed) from a mental health disorder (84%) but significantly less likely to have disclosed it to an employer (4%)



By Profession and Industry

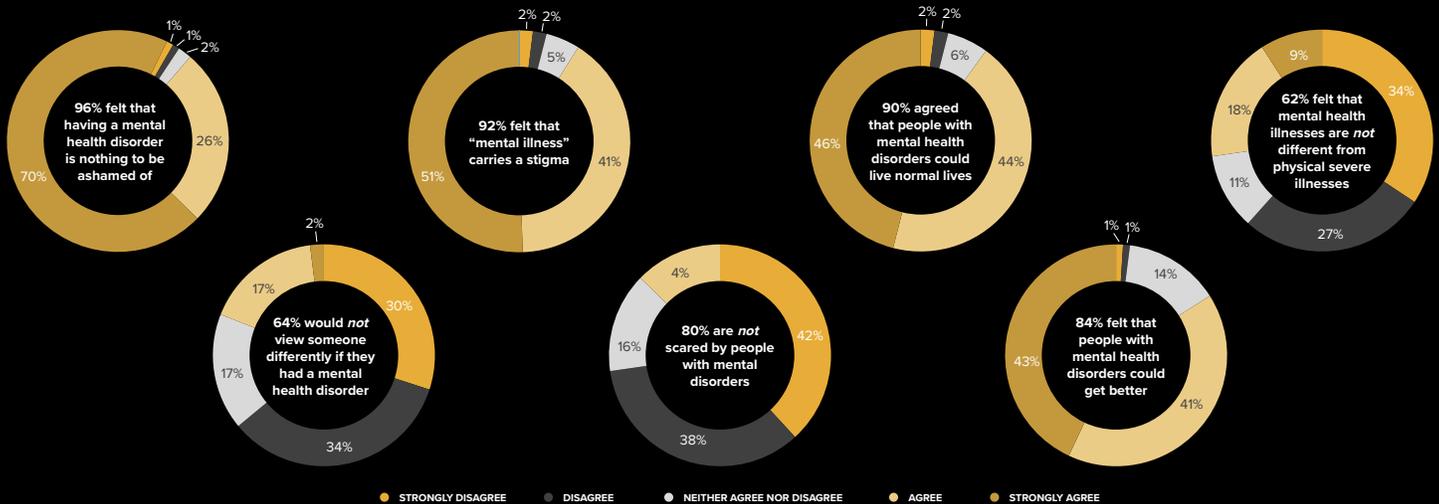
Respondents with professional degrees such as MDs and JDs were more likely to say they suffer from a mental health disorder vs. those with bachelor's and master's degrees.

Respondents in Government, Education, Business Support & Logistics, and Manufacturing all had above-average mental health disorders, with those working in manufacturing and education disclosing it to their employers less often than average.

Healthcare & pharmaceuticals, telecom, and finance all reported below average rates of mental health disorders.

Overall attitudes about mental health

While overall attitudes about mental health struggles have improved compared to a study done by the American Psychological Association in 2018, stigma about mental health disorders in the workplace remains strongly present. The Bowman Foundation for Workplace Equity and Mental Wellness aims to end the plague of the stigma of mental illness in the workplace, provide education, awareness, and programming for creating safe spaces for dialogue about mental health in the workplace; and expand the definition of workplace wellness that often does not include mental wellness.



The survey of 445 respondents was conducted by The Bowman Foundation for Workplace Equity and Mental Wellness between February 17 and March 17, 2022. Respondents took a 10-minute online survey about experiences of disclosing mental health disorders in the workplace and general attitudes about mental illness. The results were weighted by education, employment status, age, gender, race/ethnicity, household income, marital status, job level, and industry.