

# ALL IN THE MIND

The state of mental health in  
Corporate India

Awareness and Perceptions

Causes and Impact

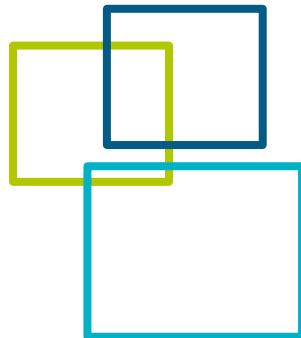
Effectiveness of measures

Covid-19 Impact

Detection and Care



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# Foreword



Since the COVID crisis started, employees' mental health concerns have risen in the country and worldwide. The pandemic has brought to the fore this serious concern across the world, and more importantly, across India, which public discourse had not paid adequate attention to. The overall fear factor – the lockdowns, the many measures of social isolation, and the risk proximity imposed – merely accelerated a trend that has been in the making for a long time now.

Mental health is a massive issue not only for individuals and households in India (it is estimated that about 250 million Indians suffered from mental illnesses in 2020\*), but is also a huge economic concern. WHO estimate of economic losses due to mental health conditions in India in the period 2012 – 2030 would be USD 1.03 trillion\*.

It is imperative that we start a dialogue about mental health and develop it into an open discourse. India Inc has historically found it hard to define, diagnose and deal with the issue. This report aims to initiate a much needed discourse. It is an endeavour to uncover the nature of the disease, and to profile the Indian corporate sector for its awareness, understanding, and systemic approach in safeguarding the mental health of the workforce.

Do workplaces cause and aggravate mental health issues? Do they, consciously or otherwise, worsen existing conditions and disorders of the mind? How aware are employers of the problem? How much a part of this problem are they? And, how much are they willing and able to be part of the solution? At Gi Group, we are investing ourselves in the quest for valid answers to these questions. As an organization committed to its ethics, Gi Group wishes to focus on a formidable issue that concerns the nation and look at possible solutions.

By triangulating employer, employee and expert views on the subject matter and weaving in existing literature and data, the report seeks answers to the questions that stare conscientious professionals everywhere. The research and data analysis underpins the rigour we have undertaken in developing this thought paper. Like with all ambitious initiatives, you - our audience - are the driver of change in the endeavour to make India mentally healthy. And we wish to know and learn more from your thoughts.

**Marcos Segador Arreola,  
Country Manager, Gi Group**

\*Source : What India must do to solve its mental health crisis?, Economic Times, Feb 2020

# Gi Group

is one of the world's leading human capital solutions and services provider, offering services in various domains of talent acquisition and management. The group is active in the field of Temporary and Permanent Staffing, Site Managed Services, Search & Selection, Domestic & International Recruitment, Recruitment Process Optimization (RPO), Executive Search and HR Consulting & Training. We have direct and indirect presence and strategic partnerships in about 57 countries across Europe, Asia, America and Africa. Gi Group has developed a strong expertise through its specialist divisions and dedicated local and international teams.

Gi Group has been present in India since last two decades, helping clients implement highly crucial projects by hiring and managing great talent. In India Gi Group actively works with customers across the country through a network of offices in 10 major cities. We help organizations achieve accelerated growth by helping them acquire the right kind of talent and providing them with a continuum of staffing solutions, from short term to long term and incidental to strategic, for organizations of all sizes and across multiple locations. Our list of clients ranges from global Fortune 500 companies to large Indian Companies and New Economy Start-ups. We service our customers through a combination of technology and an extremely agile and responsive team of recruiters and process specialists, thus enabling our clients to focus on business performance and productivity.

Ranked globally and in India as one of the largest staffing firms by Staffing Industry Analysts, Gi Group is also a global corporate member of the World Employment Confederation (formerly CIETT). In India, Gi Group is one of the founding members of Indian Staffing Federation (ISF). Gi Group is also a long term strategic member of National HRD Network.



# Executive SUMMARY

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## Workplace influence and impact

Organizations acknowledge that workplaces influence mental health. And employers and employees broadly agree on the workplace factors that influence mental health.

- ▶ 78% of the employers surveyed believe that workplaces influence mental health; 21% think that workplaces also have the potential to cause mental health issues.
- ▶ But employers and employees contradict each other on two main factors of influence. 77% of the employers believe that long, erratic, always on work hours is the top factor and undermine the role of leadership. 79% of the employees believe that leadership plays the top role among all the factors that influence mental health.

Employers have identified specific workplace concerns that lead to mental health issues. And an overwhelming majority of the employers surveyed believe mental wellness impacts organizational performance and growth.

- ▶ 70% of all employers surveyed believe that mental health has a serious (45%) or significant (25%) impact on organizational performance or growth.



## Awareness, importance and actionability

Mental health awareness, among employers, has a strong linkage with the importance they give to related concerns. However, importance leads to proportionate action only among those who are sensitive to the concerns.

- ▶ There is widespread awareness among employers, but the gap between awareness and action is substantially wide. 94% are aware of mental health issues and 15% are sensitive to mental health concerns. However, only 9% take awareness to action.
- ▶ Even among the 15% of employers who are sensitive to mental health issues, formal measures and policies are an exception and not a norm. Only one-third of the employers in this group have implemented Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) or similar other formal programs.

Employer and employee sensibilities do not do justice to the severity of the problem. Employers tend to undermine the pervasiveness of mental wellness issues and most employees do not think the problem is serious.

- ▶ Only 53% of all employers have a realistic assessment of the magnitude of mental health issues.
- ▶ There is a general lack of a sense of seriousness among employees, despite 35% having experienced mental health issues – directly or via someone they know.



## Effectiveness of corporate initiatives and roadblocks

Organizational policies and mechanisms do not effectively address mental health concerns in an overwhelming majority of cases.

- ▶ 54% of the respondents do not have formal policies and mechanisms in place, and deal with mental wellness concerns in their own informal ways. Only 14% have formal policies and mechanisms that are receptive to mental wellness cases that may arise in their organization.
- ▶ Only 15% of all employees observe that their organizational measures are very effective. 33% are unclear about the effectiveness of the set up in their organizations. The remaining 52% are unsatisfied.
- ▶ The silver lining, however, is that 82% of the employers surveyed are sensitizing their organizations to be receptive to mental health concerns, 63% are opening up multiple channels for people to speak up, and 51% encourage healthy interpersonal equations between people.
- ▶ Stigma surrounding mental health is the most formidable roadblock for the HR manager. In addition to the top concerns a lack of leadership buy-in is seen to be all-pervasive and limiting.
- ▶ 29% of the employers surveyed are constrained by stigma. Among 19%, mental wellness is solely the HR manager's / department's concern, and in 16% of the organizations initiatives do not succeed because of people's unwillingness to participate.

## Covid-19 impact

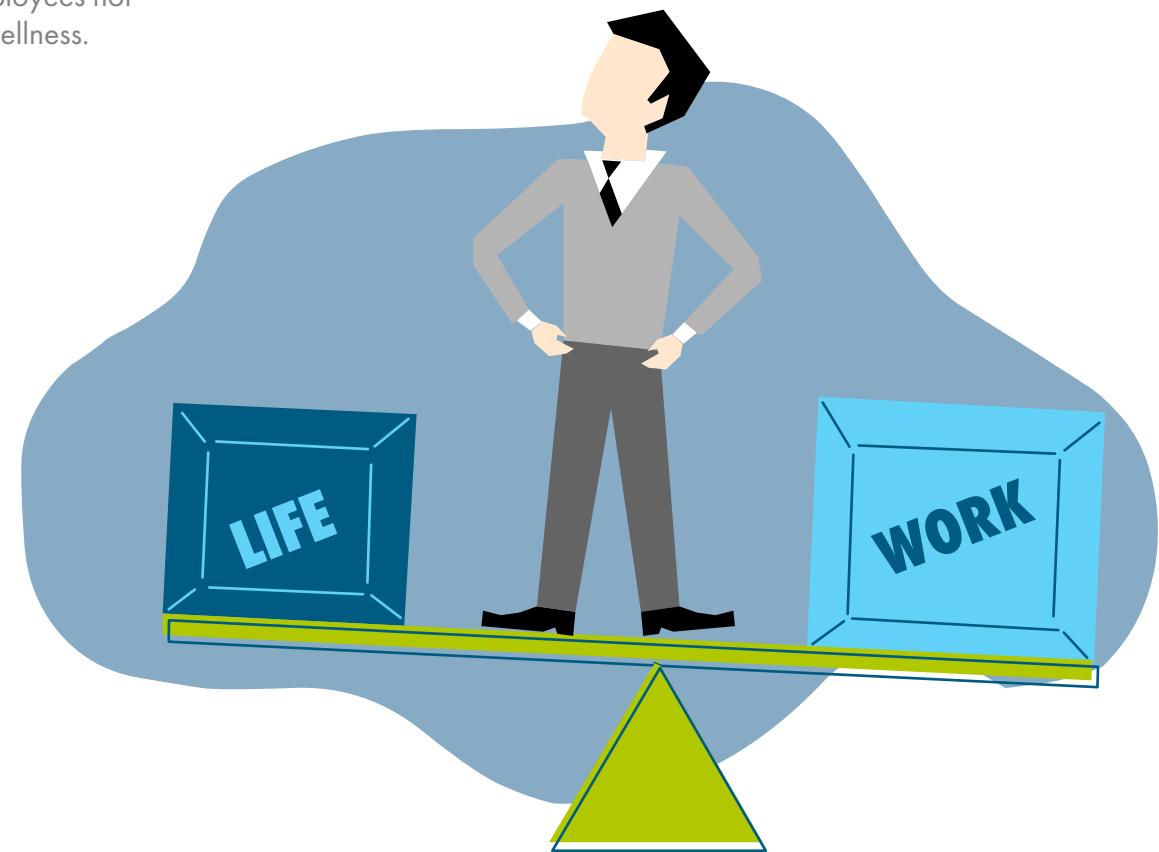
Covid-19 was a mixed bag for issues concerning mental wellness. Awareness and accessibility leapfrogged and taboos significantly diminished. However, only a small proportion of employers got their mental health act together.

- ▶ 29% of the employees surveyed suffered due to erratic work schedules and 21% suffered due to reduced salaries.
- ▶ 48% of the employers surveyed have recognized the Covid-19 impact on mental wellness. 29% have actually taken steps to deal with probable situations - both online and offline.



## Conclusions

- ▶ Employers are acutely aware about mental health issues, and they also recognize the serious and significant impact mental health has on organizational performance and growth.
- ▶ Most employers who consider mental wellness to be an important issue have only taken informal measures and have no formal policies to address mental wellness.
- ▶ Three factors have rendered organizational initiatives largely ineffective -
  - a) Employers not closing the gap between awareness and action, b) employees not perceiving it to be a serious issue and c) the stigma surrounding mental wellness.
- ▶ There is an urgent need for employers and employees to gain a shared understanding of the causes and influencers of mental health issues.
- ▶ Employer knowledge of mental health issues and their impact is not percolating into employee wellness policies.
- ▶ Among poorly aware employers there are substantial gaps between degree of awareness, importance accorded, and action.
- ▶ Only a small proportion of employers and employees believes that the mental health policies and measures have been effective.
- ▶ Covid-19 is a wake-up call for employers to sensitize their organizations and formalize their mental wellness approach.



# PERVASIVENESS and SEVERITY of mental health issues in India

## Expert Speak

Dealing with unhealthy emotions and coming to a spectrum of healthier emotions - is what mental health is all about.

- Dr Shrradha Sidhwani



## At a glance: mental health in India

### WITHOUT CONSIDERING THE INCIDENCE OF COVID-19

About **250 million** Indians (20% of India) suffer from **mental health issues** in 2020

WHO estimate of economic losses due to mental health conditions in India (2012 – 2030): **USD1.03 trillion**

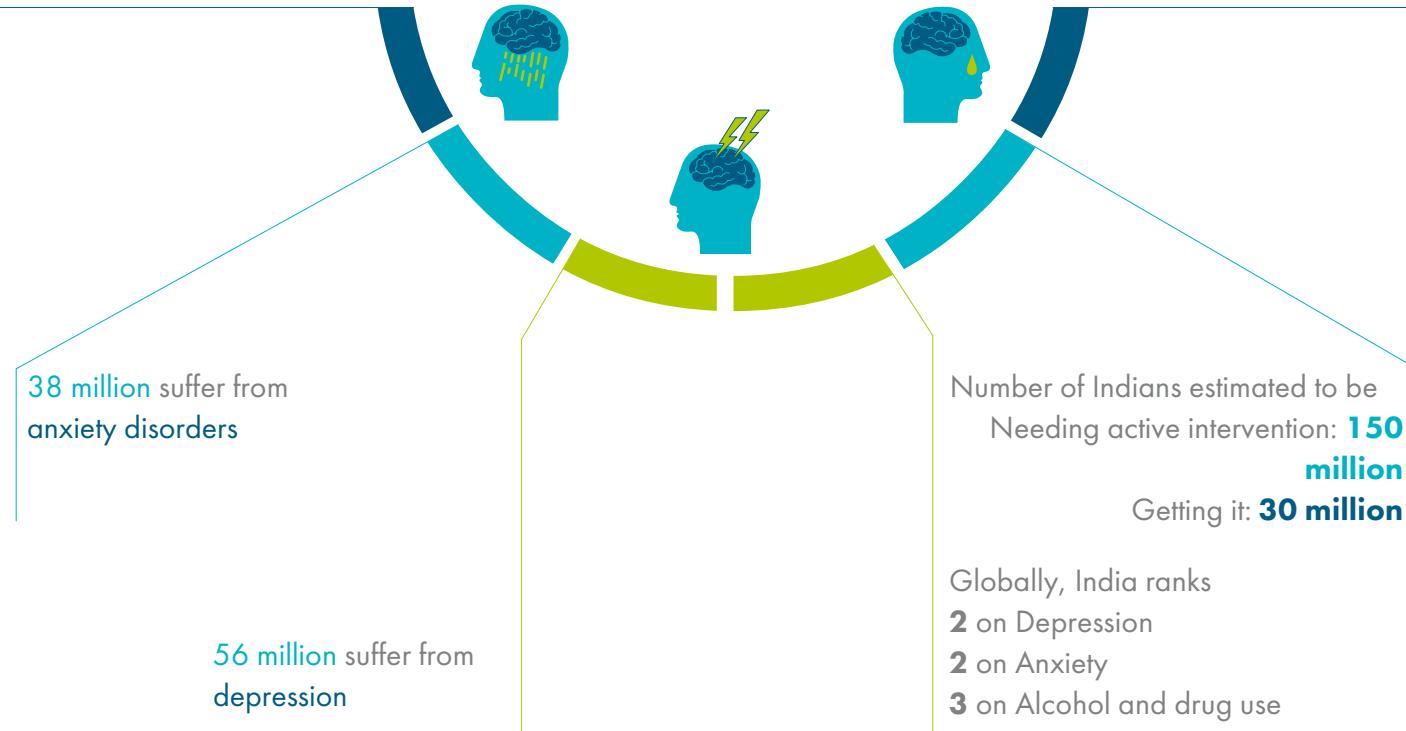


Fig-1: Key statistics- the state of mental health in India

The magnitude of mental health issues in India is one of epidemic proportions. The nature of the issues makes it hard to detect and diagnose. And, they are estimated to impose a steep cost on the country over a near-two decade period.

Sources : 1) What India must do to solve its mental health crisis?, Economictimes, Feb 2020 2) Gender differentials and state variations in suicide deaths in India: the Global Burden of Disease Study 1990-2016, Lancet 3) The 10 most depressed countries , usnews, Sept 2016 4) How committed is India to mental Health, The Diplomat, March 2020

## How India Inc. fares

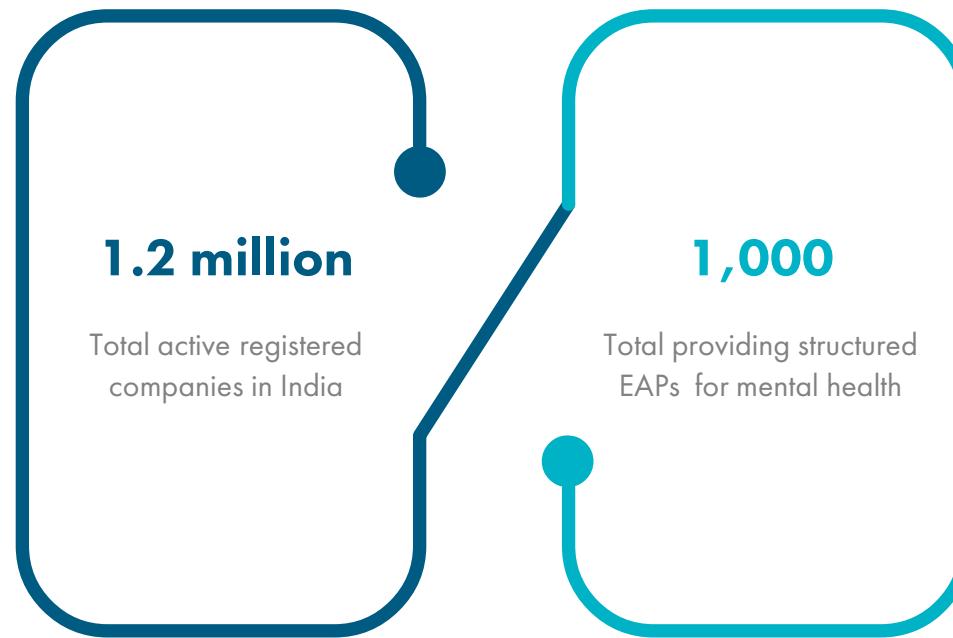
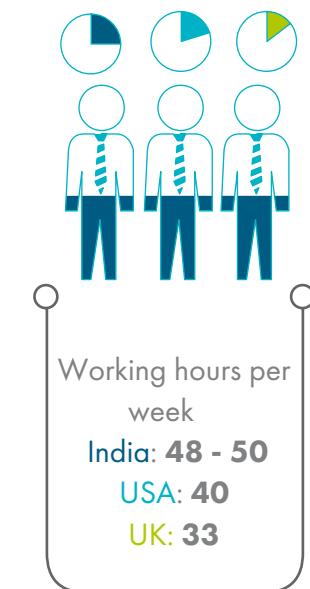


Fig-2: The state of mental wellness initiatives in Corporate India.



Workplaces add to mental health concerns and do little to address them. Indians are among the most overworked workers globally while earning the lowest minimum statutory wage in the Asia-Pacific region, barring Bangladesh.



Sources : 1) What India must do to solve its mental health crisis?, Economictimes, Feb 2020 2) Gender differentials and state variations in suicide deaths in India: the Global Burden of Disease Study 1990-2016, Lancet 3) The 10 most depressed countries , usnews, Sept 2016 4) How committed is India to mental Health, The Diplomat, March 2020 5) Number of registered cos reaches 20.14 lakh at June-end, The Economic Times, July 2020

# ROLE OF THE WORKPLACE

in causing and furthering  
MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

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**Expert Speak**

**Personality conflicts - especially with reporting managers. This, along with office politics, is an unbearable combination for most employees.**

**- Dr Sagar Mundada**



## Do workplaces cause mental health issues or only aggravate them?

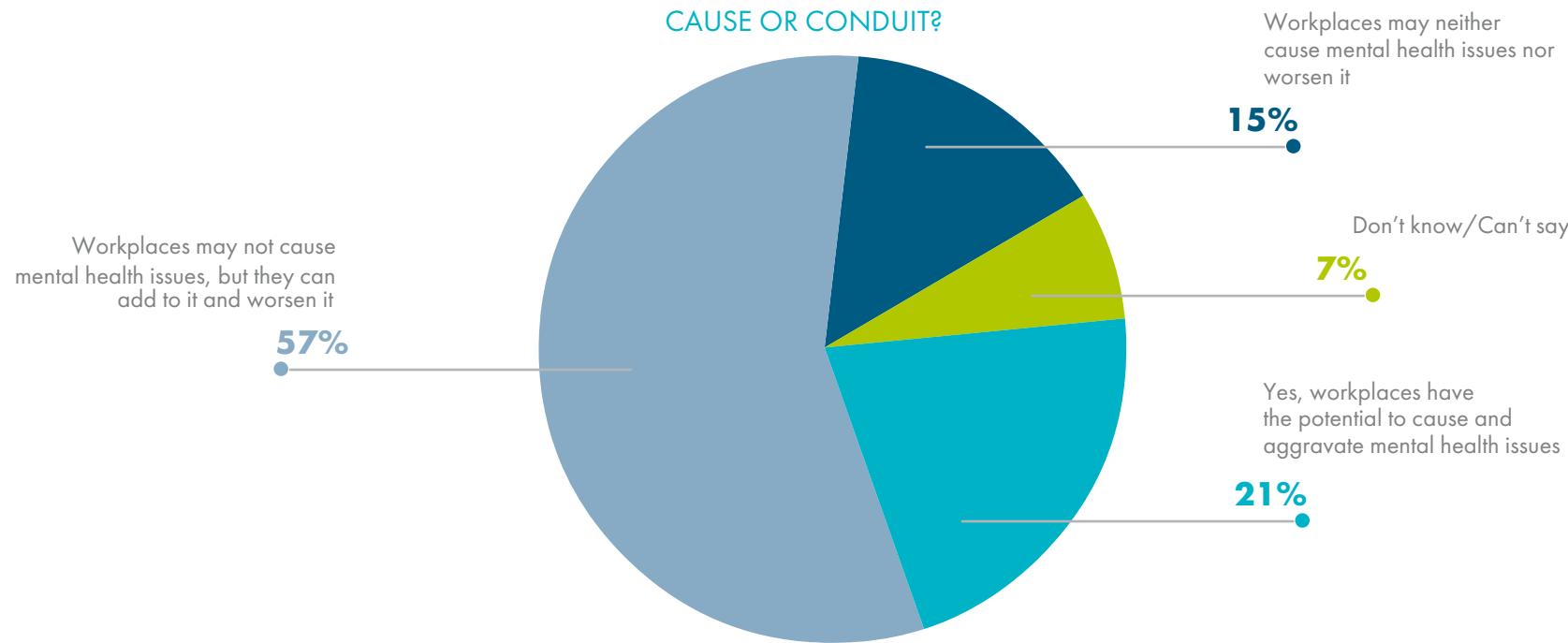


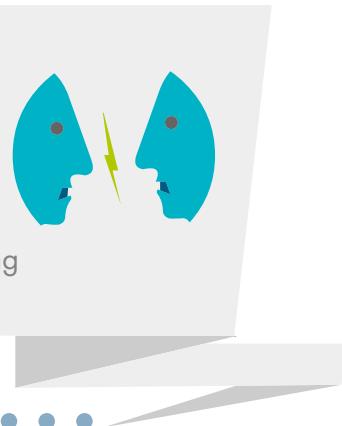
Fig-3: Employer Opinion: Top three factors that may cause or further mental health issues in working professionals

### WHAT THE EXPERTS HAVE TO SAY

The various aspects of today's corporate culture

- ▶ Erratic schedules hampering sleep
- ▶ Personality conflicts straining work relationships
- ▶ The need for social validation
- ▶ Interpersonal conflicts

- are a fertile ground for both causing and aggravating mental health issues.



The amorphous nature of mental health issues necessitates the question: are workplaces a cause or merely a conduit for the issues? The popular perception - among 57% of the employers surveyed - is that workplaces may not cause health issues but they can worsen them. 21% of the respondents, however, believe that workplaces can potentially cause as well as aggravate the issues.

Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
 Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

## How workplaces influence mental health

### WORK REASONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

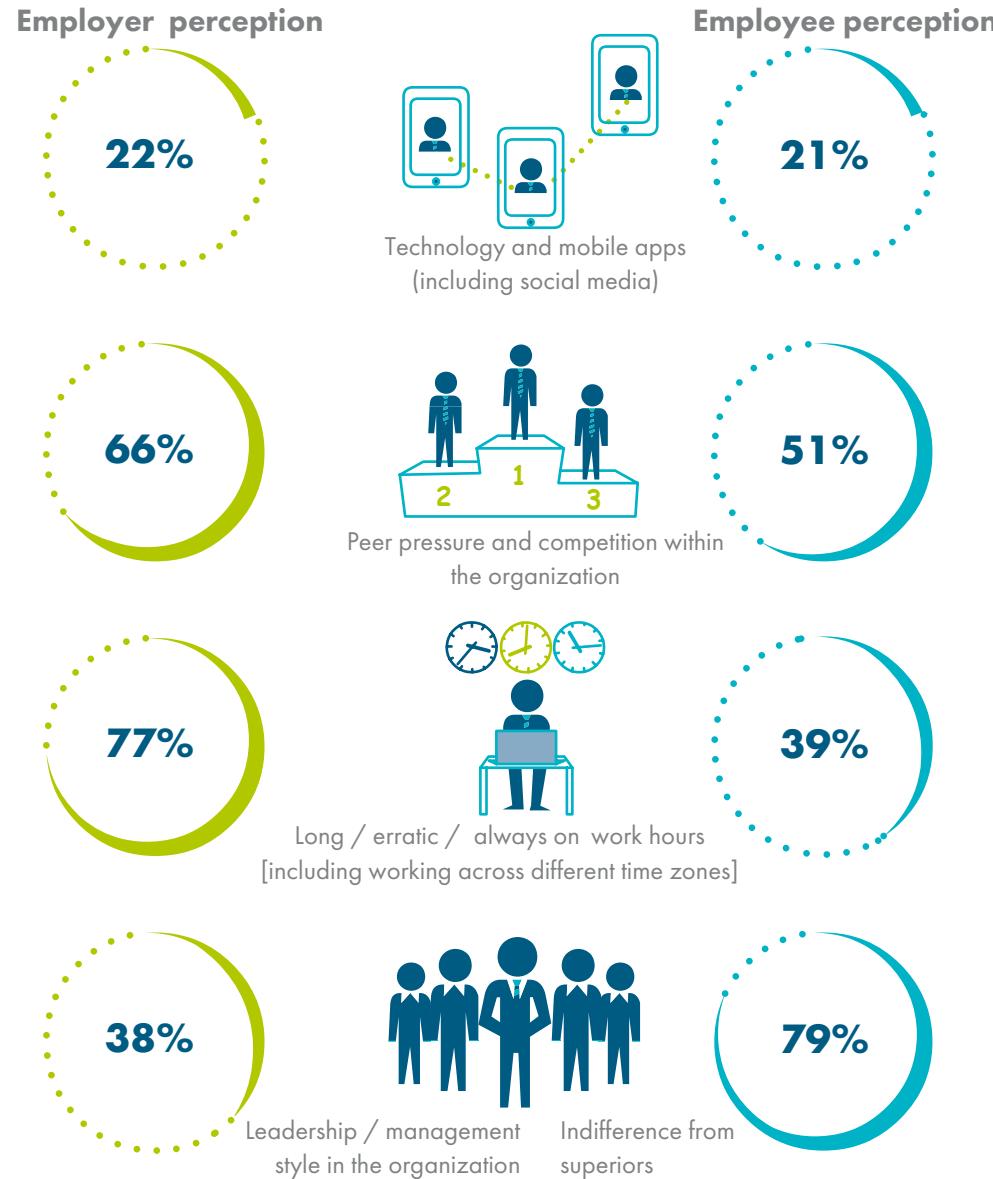


Fig-4: Common reasons for workplaces causing/furthering issues  
Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
Note: the percentages add up to more than 100 since each respondent is allowed multiple responses

## How workplaces influence mental health - where is the disconnect ?

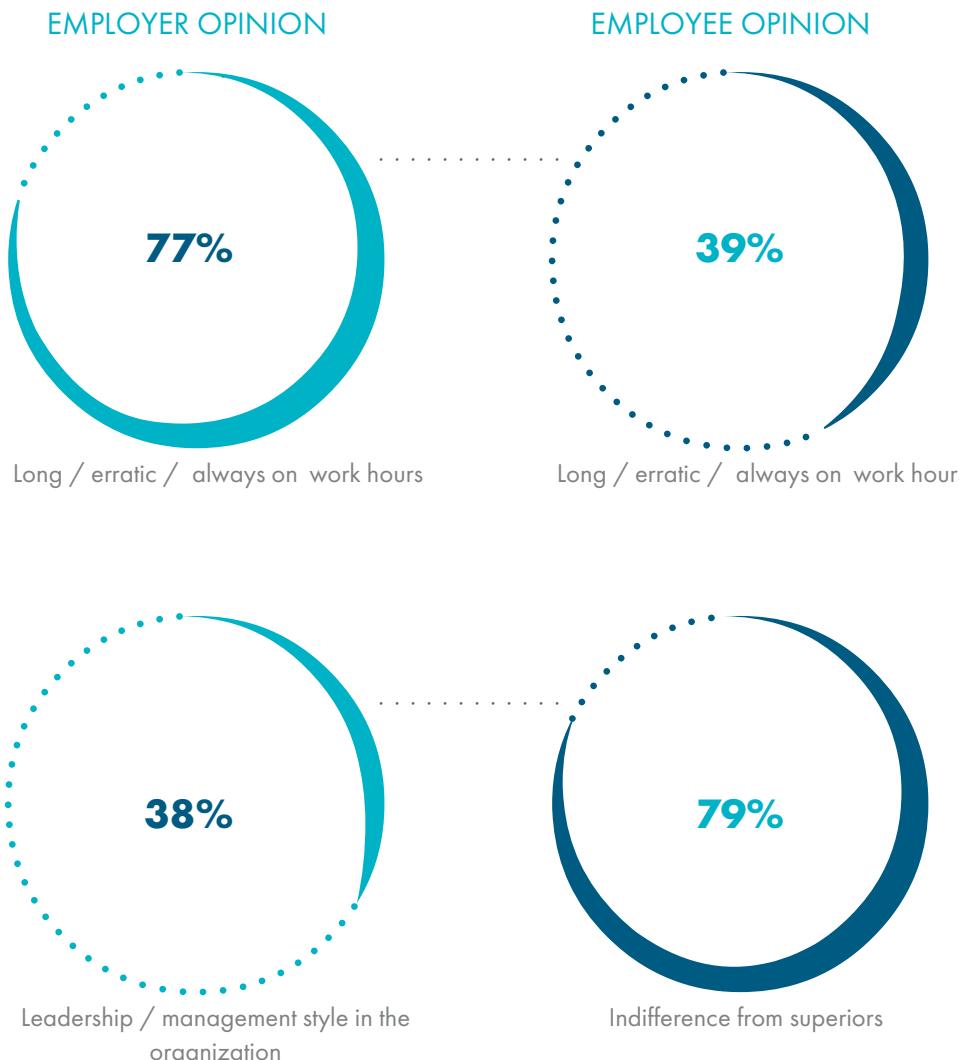


Fig-5: The glaring contradiction in employer and employee perceptions of influencing factors.

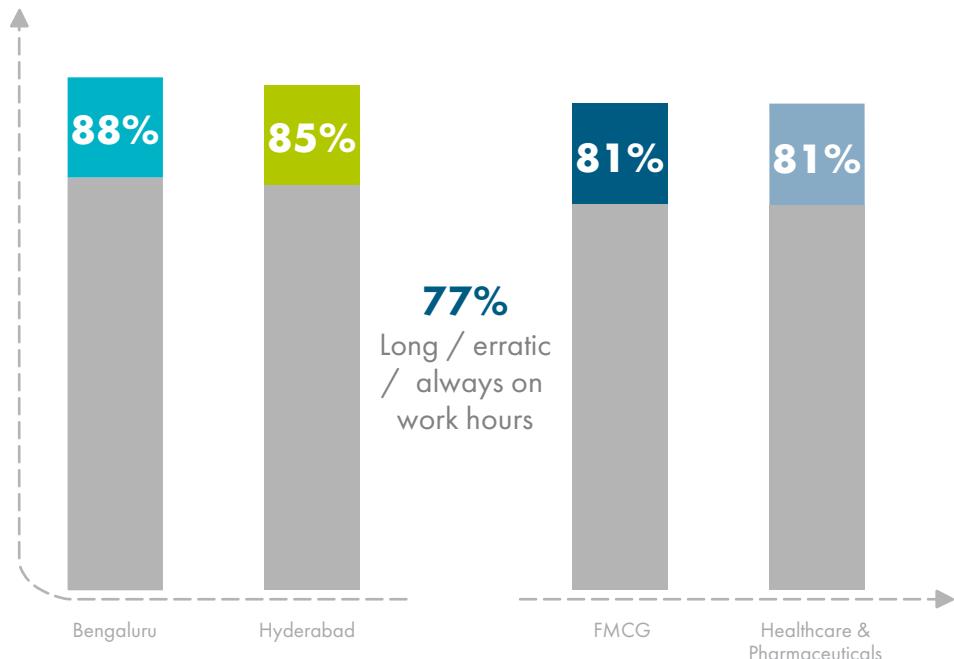
Note: the percentages add up to more than 100 since each respondent is allowed multiple responses  
 Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
 Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

Most employers (77%) blame erratic work schedules and peer pressure and play down the role of leadership. 79% of the employees, who feel that leadership is right on top of the reasons workplaces cause or further mental health issues, contradict this.

## How workplaces influence mental health - where is the disconnect ?

### EMPLOYER OPINION

#### Trending it up



### EMPLOYEE OPINION

#### Undermining it

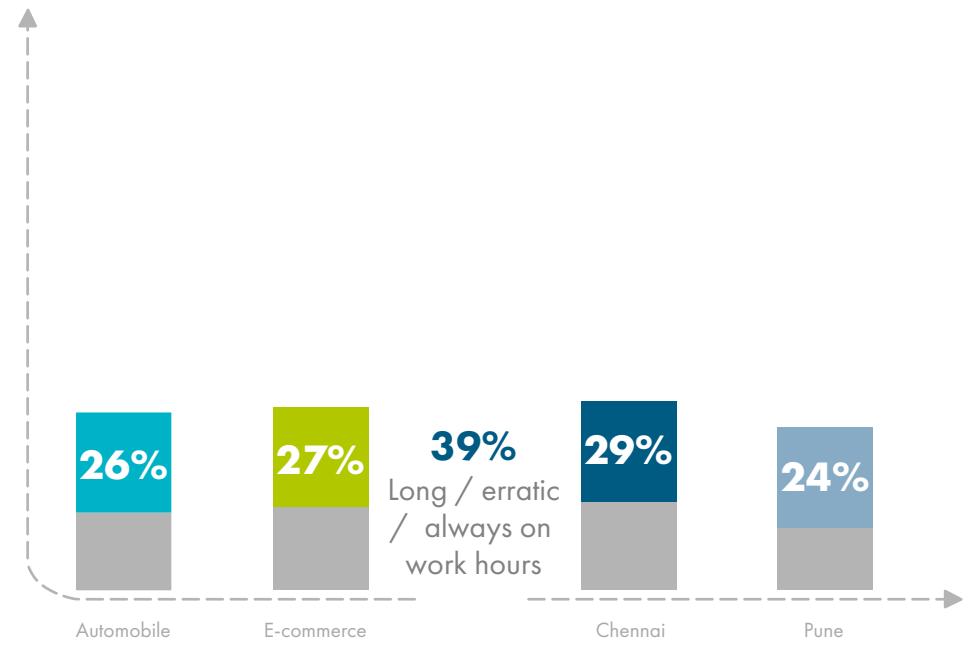


Fig-6: Sectors and cities causing the disconnect - "Long / erratic / 'always on' work hours"

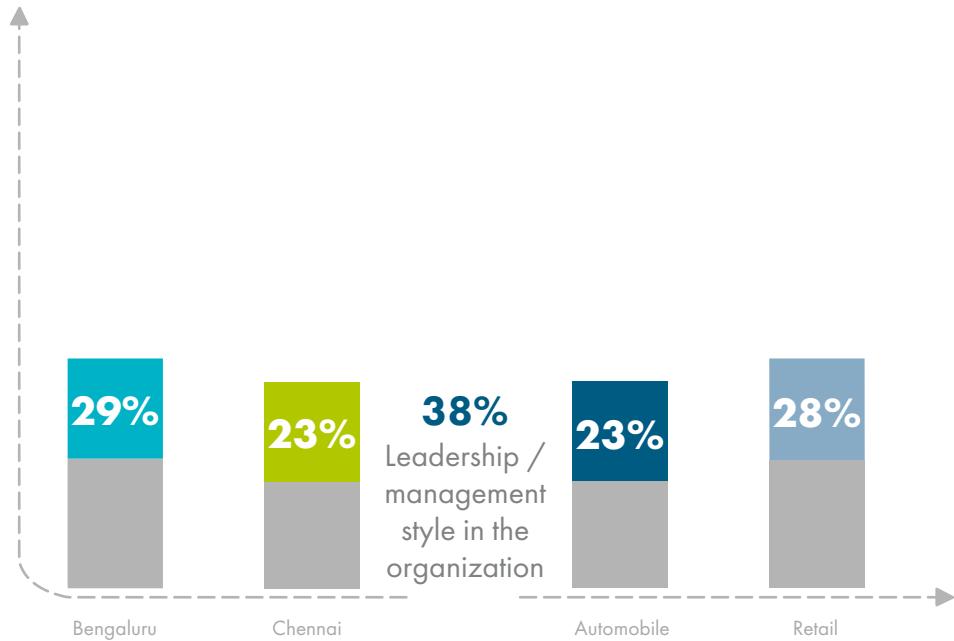
"Long / erratic / 'always on' work hours" - which sectors and cities are driving the contradiction between employer and employee opinions? 81% - 88% of the FMCG and BFSI organizations across Bangalore and Chennai are trending up the role of work hours; and 20% - 30% of the employees from small and medium-sized Automobile organizations in Hyderabad and Pune are undermining the role.

Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

## How workplaces influence mental health - where is the disconnect ?

### EMPLOYER OPINION

#### Undermining it



### EMPLOYEE OPINION

#### Trending it up

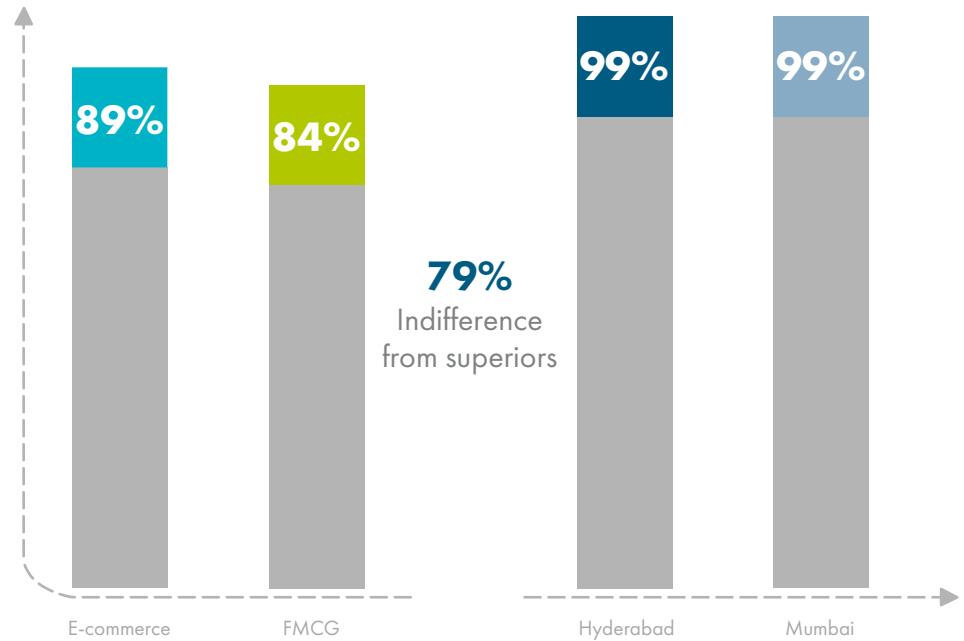


Fig-7: Sectors and cities causing the disconnect - "Leadership / management style in the organization"

"Leadership / management style in the organization" - which sectors and cities are driving the contradiction between employer and employee opinions? 23% - 29% of small and medium-sized Automobile and FMCG organizations from Bangalore and Chennai undermine the role; 84% - 99% of the employees from small and large E-Commerce and FMCG organizations from Mumbai and Hyderabad are trending up the role..

# IMPACT of poor mental health on EMPLOYEE LIVES and ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

## Expert Speak

Type-A personalities / perfectionists set themselves up, and we are having to tell them that imperfection is a part of the journey, and is essential to growth.

- Dr Shrradha Sidhwani



## The top concerns in workplaces

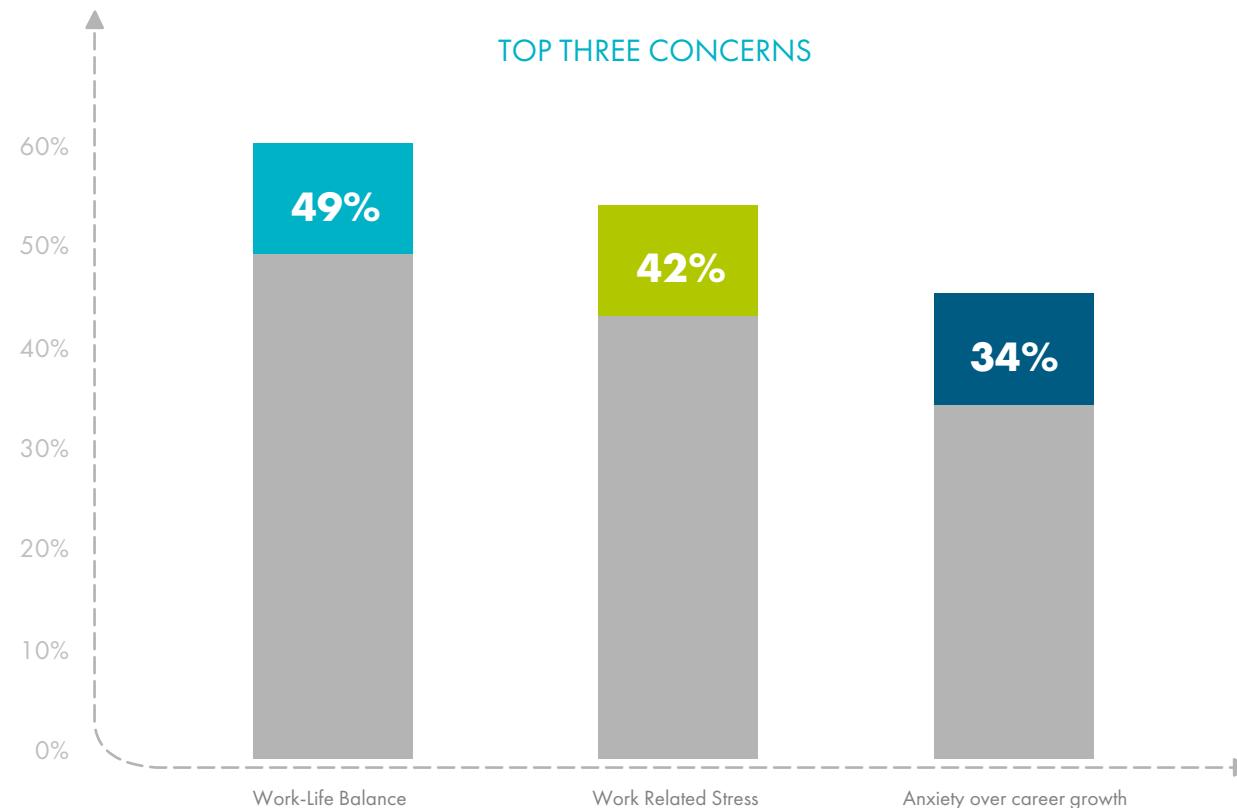


Fig-8: Employer Opinion: The top three concerns linked to mental health in workplaces

Understanding the impact of mental health issues requires organizations to identify the specific concerns prevalent in the workplace. The top concerns linked to mental health in the workplace as per employers, are the ones that are directly related to work. "Work-life balance" is ranked on top by the highest proportion of employers (49%), followed by "Work related stress" and "Anxiety over career growth".

## The top concerns in workplaces

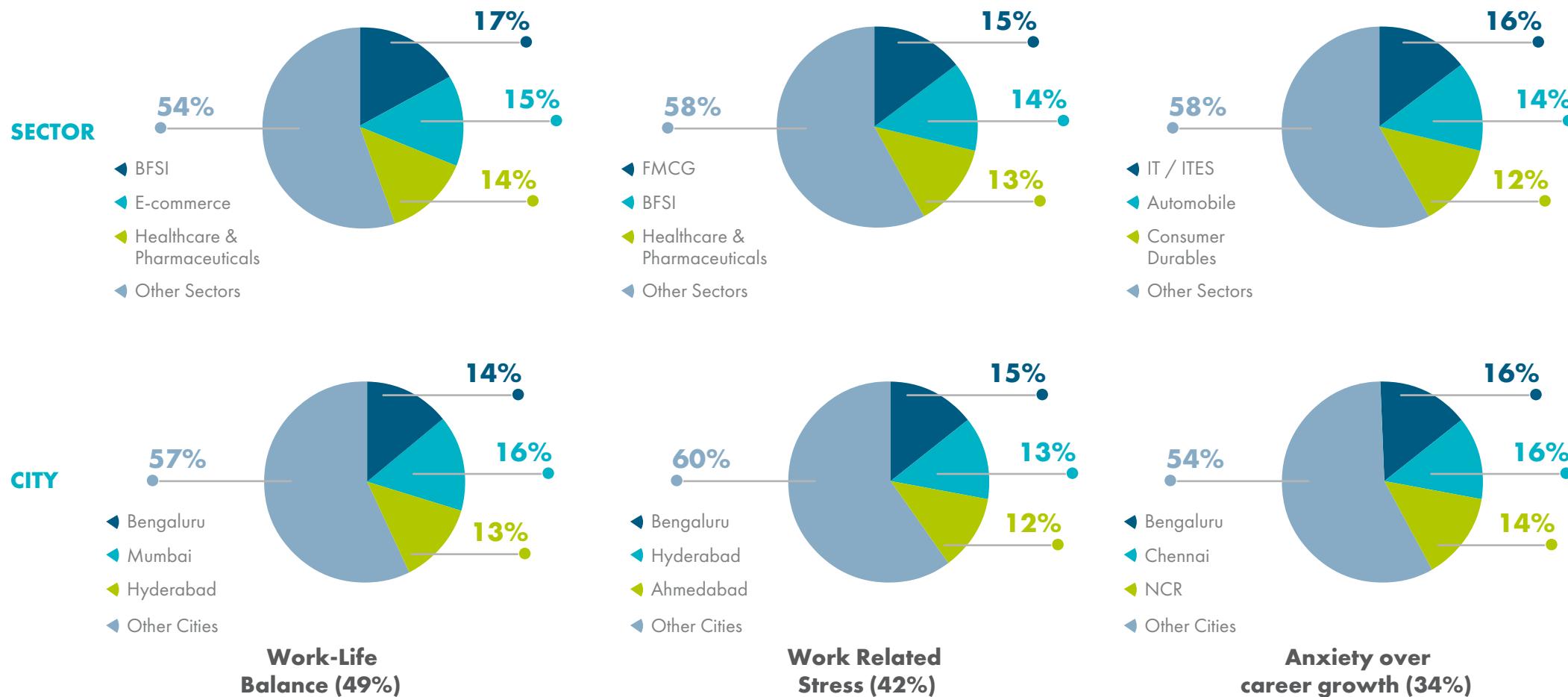
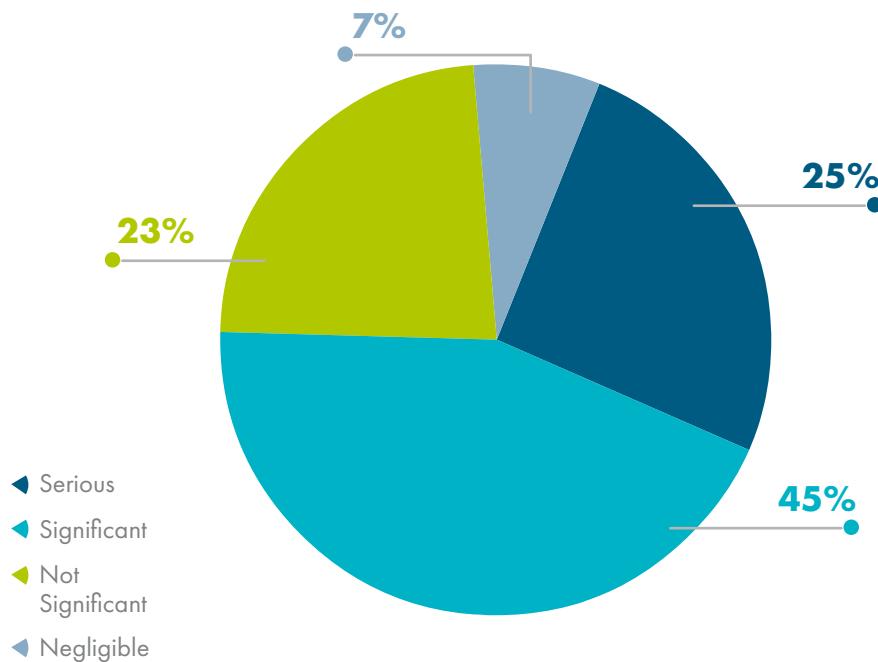


Fig-9: Employer Opinion: The top three concerns linked to mental health in workplaces

Which sectors and cities lead the recognition of the top three concerns? BFSI and Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals, and Bangalore and Hyderabad, represent the top sectors and cities that rank "Work-life balance" and "Work related stress" as the top concerns at the workplace. 13% - 16% of respondents come from the top three sectors and cities for each stated concern.

## Impact of mental health on organizational performance and growth

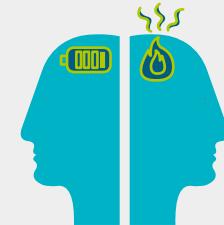
### IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH



### WHAT THE EXPERTS HAVE TO SAY

The following are, often, a direct fallout of mental health issues

- ▶ Reduced productivity
- ▶ Burnout
- ▶ Loss of purpose and motivation



and have close linkages with individual and organizational performance and growth.

Fig-10: Employer Opinion: Does mental health impact organizational performance and growth?

Employers understand the fallout of mental health issues on the functioning of their organizations in varying ways. A big majority (70%) of all employers believe that mental health has a "serious" (45%) or "significant" (25%) impact on organizational performance or organizational growth. 30% believe that there is "insignificant" or "negligible impact" on either performance or growth.

## Impact of mental health on organizational performance and growth

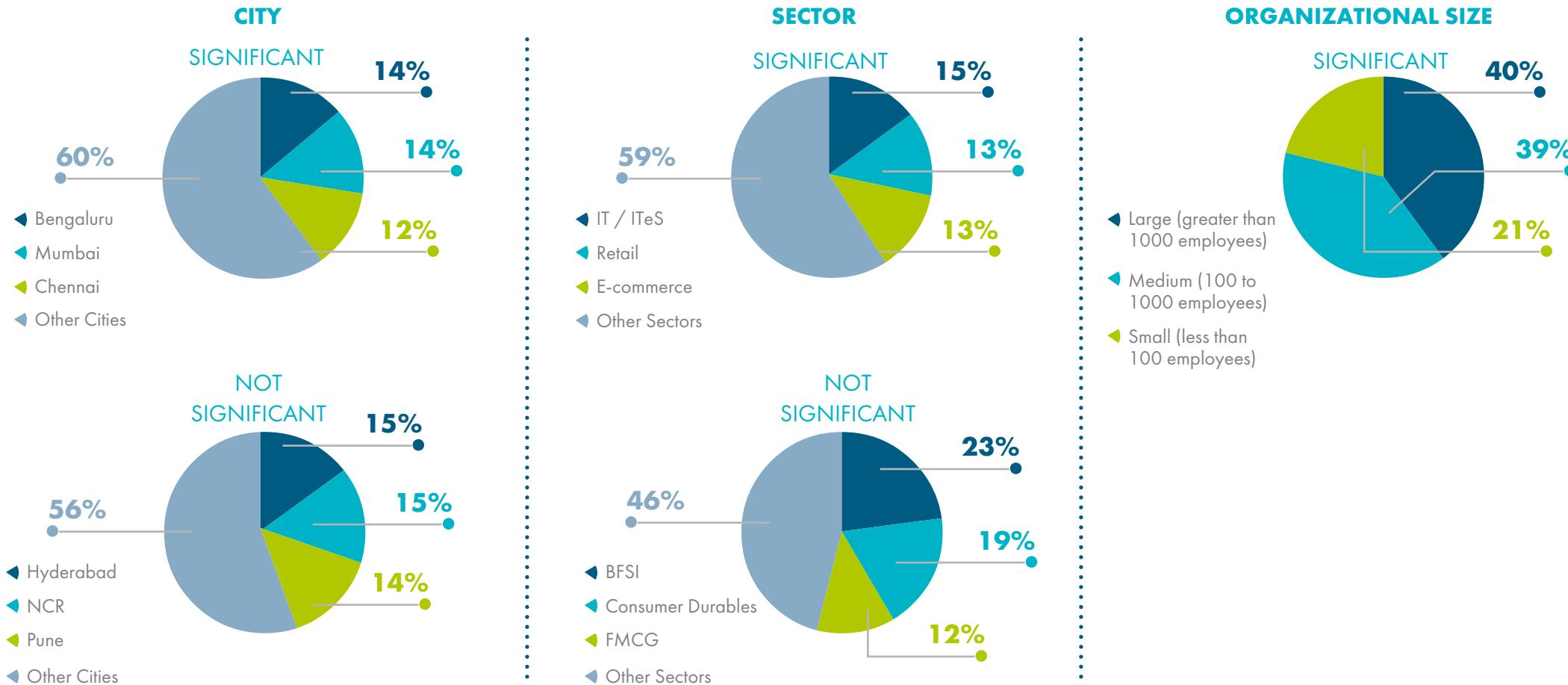


Fig-11: Employer Opinion: Impact of mental health on organizational performance and growth - by sector, city and organizational size

Bangalore, Mumbai and Chennai, among cities, IT/ITeS, Retail and Ecommerce, among sectors, and large and medium sized organizations have the highest proportion of employers who believe that mental health has a significant impact on organizational performance and growth.

# AWARENESS and RECEPTIVITY

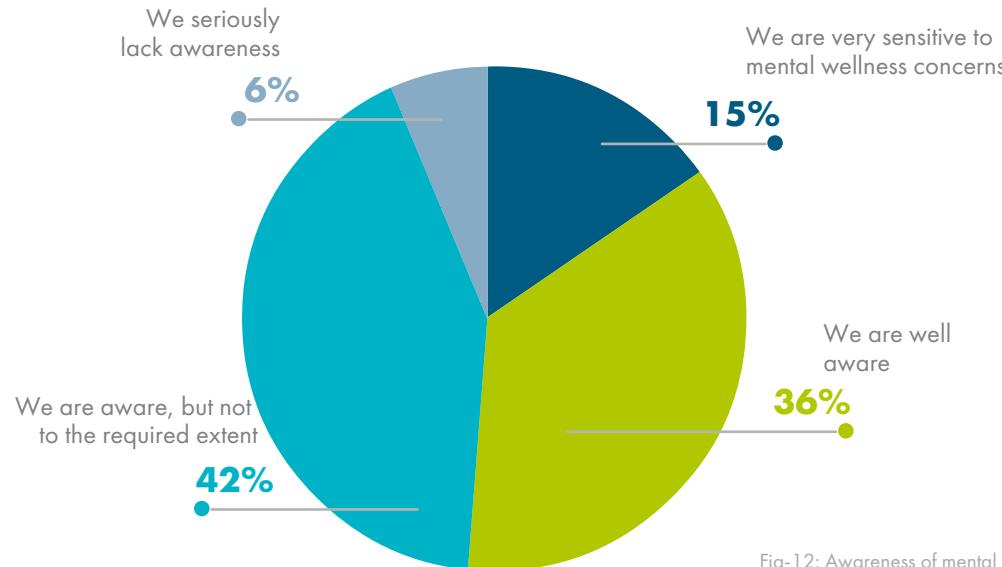
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**Expert Speak**  
**One of the critical roles  
of employers is to  
liaison with various  
stakeholders and  
maintain harmony.**  
- Dr Vijay Bhaskar



## How deeply aware are employers and employees about mental health?

### EMPLOYER AWARENESS LEVELS



### EMPLOYEE AWARENESS LEVELS

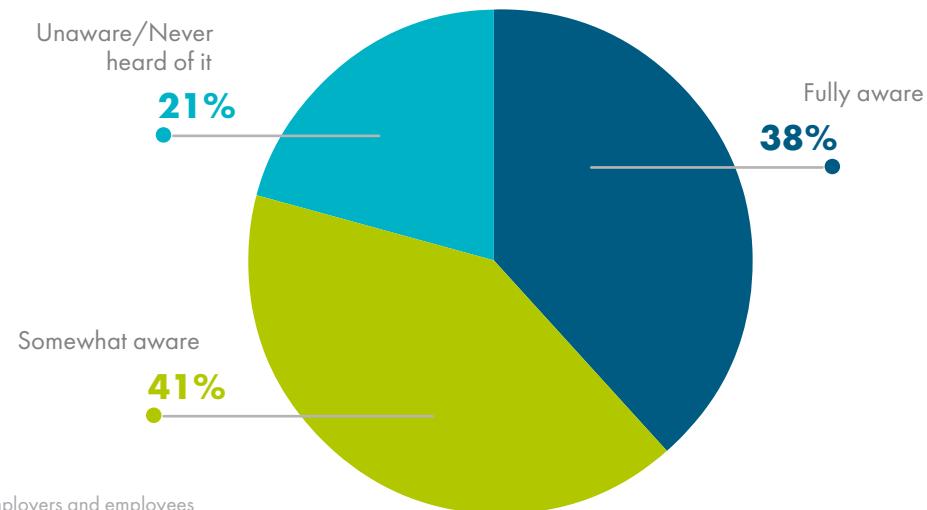


Fig-12: Awareness of mental health issues among employers and employees

### WHAT THE EXPERTS HAVE TO SAY

Almost all organizations are well aware of mental health issues.

- ▶ These are human traits. One undergoes stress early on in one's life and so, one knows it is part of the mental makeup.
- ▶ The acceptance and integration of the aspects of mental health into the corporate culture is very important, but it has been ignored over time.



The degree of awareness of mental health issues varies drastically among both employers and employees. Although 94% of all employers, and 79% of all employees, are aware of mental health concerns to varying degrees, only 51% of the employers are either well aware or very sensitively aware, and only 38% of the employees are fully aware.

Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
 Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

## Awareness levels the top and bottom sectors and cities

### EMPLOYER

#### Top Sectors



#### Bottom Sectors



#### Top Cities



#### Bottom Cities



% aware

% unaware

### EMPLOYEE

#### Top Sectors



#### Bottom Sectors



#### Top Cities



#### Bottom Cities



% aware

% unaware

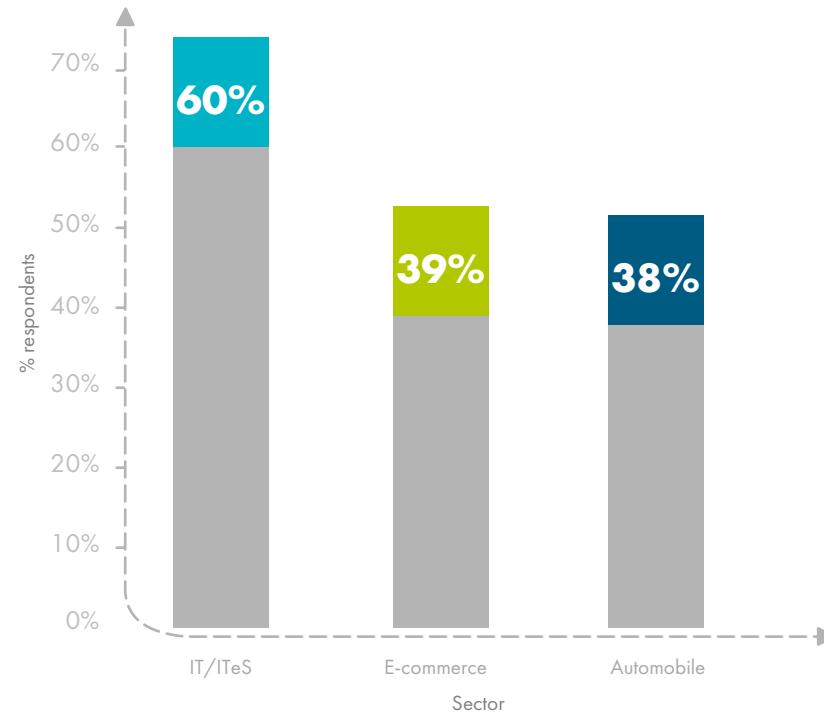
Fig-13: Top Sectors and Cities and Bottom Sectors and cities - based on awareness

IT/ITeS and BFSI are the most aware sectors across both employers and employees. FMCG and E-commerce lack awareness the most. Chennai and Bangalore lead, and Hyderabad and NCR lag, amongst the cities. In general, awareness levels are higher among employers than among employees. Also, awareness levels increase with organization size. Large organizations are most aware at 53%, followed by medium sized (34%) and small (13%).

## Employer assessment: magnitude of the problem across India Inc.

### SECTOR

It is quite common (1 in 20 adults is affected)



### CITY

It is quite common (1 in 20 adults is affected)

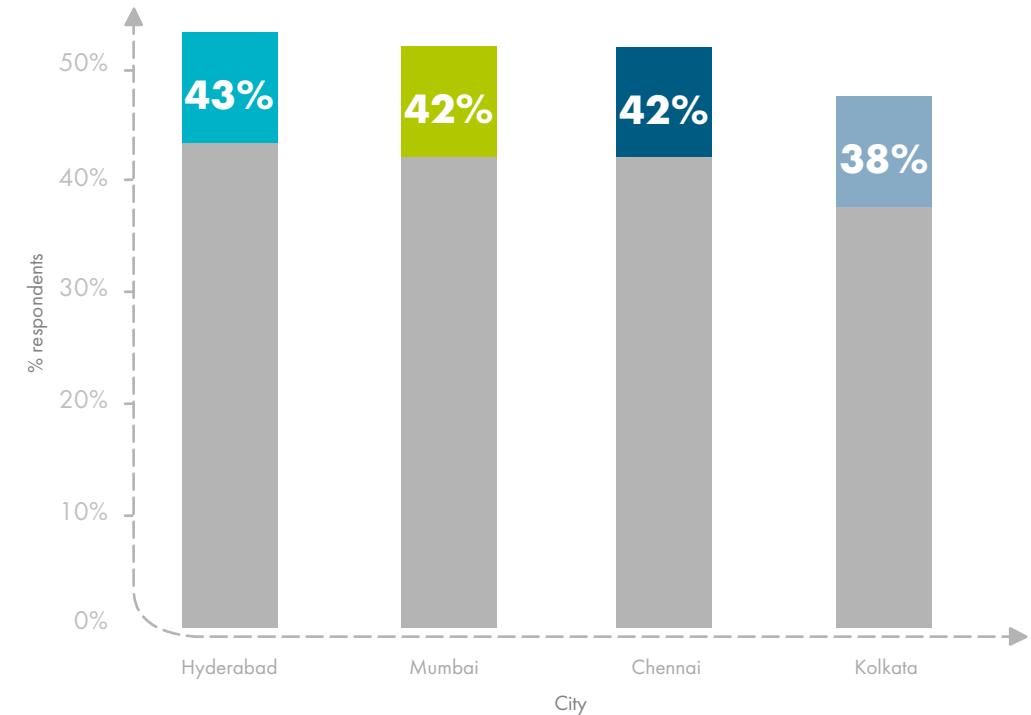
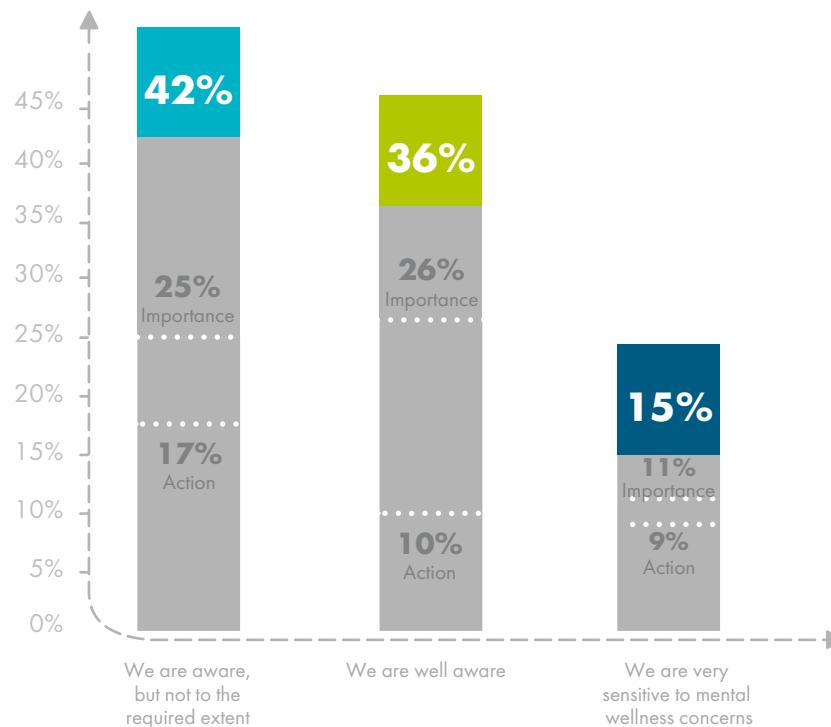


Fig-14: Employers with a realistic assessment of the magnitude of the problem across Corporate India

While the pervasiveness of mental health issues is well understood across specific sectors (IT/ITeS, E-commerce and Automobile) and cities (Hyderabad, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata), and among 41% of large organizations, most employers severely undermine the magnitude of the problem.

## Has awareness led to importance and action?

AWARENESS > IMPORTANCE > ACTION



Action: Presence of mental health initiatives in the corporate wellness program

Fig-15: How aware are employers about mental health concerns in their organizations?

WHAT THE EXPERTS HAVE TO SAY

In general, Indian organizations have a rather unorganized approach to mental wellness.

- Often, the approach is not based on real mental health issues people within the organization face.
- A vast majority of organizations have the intent but have no action plan. So, when employees actually need help, they are left to fend for themselves.

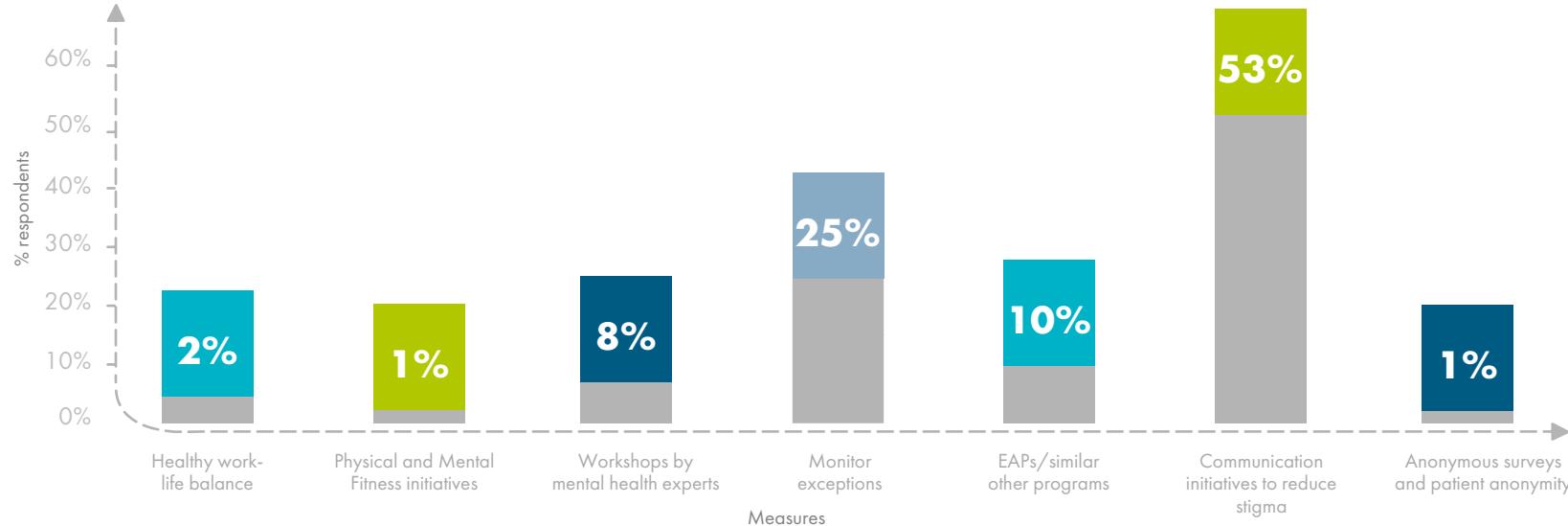


A higher degree of awareness has translated into organizations attaching importance to mental wellness concerns, which has translated into the presence of mental wellness programs in such organizations. However, employers are yet to translate the importance they attach to mental health into proportionate action. The gap is seen across categories but is glaring with those with lower levels of awareness.

Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

## What receptive measures have “aware” employers implemented?

WE ARE AWARE, BUT NOT TO THE REQUIRED EXTENT



WE ARE WELL AWARE

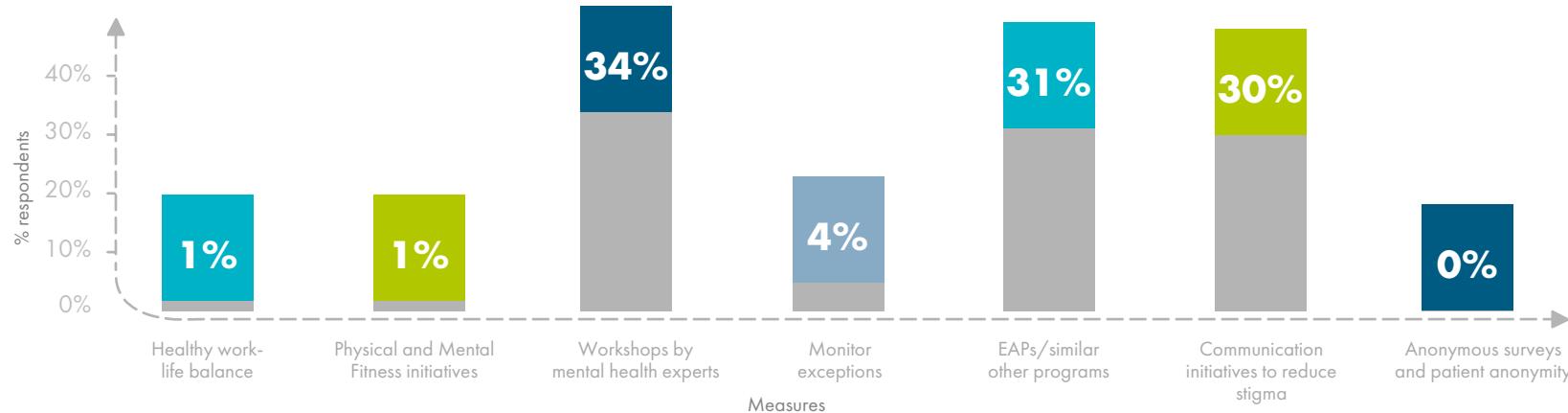


Fig-16: Employer Opinion: Measures implemented by “aware” employers aimed at being receptive to mental health concerns

Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
 Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

Note: the percentages add up to more than 100 since each respondent is allowed multiple responses

## What receptive measures have “aware” employers implemented?

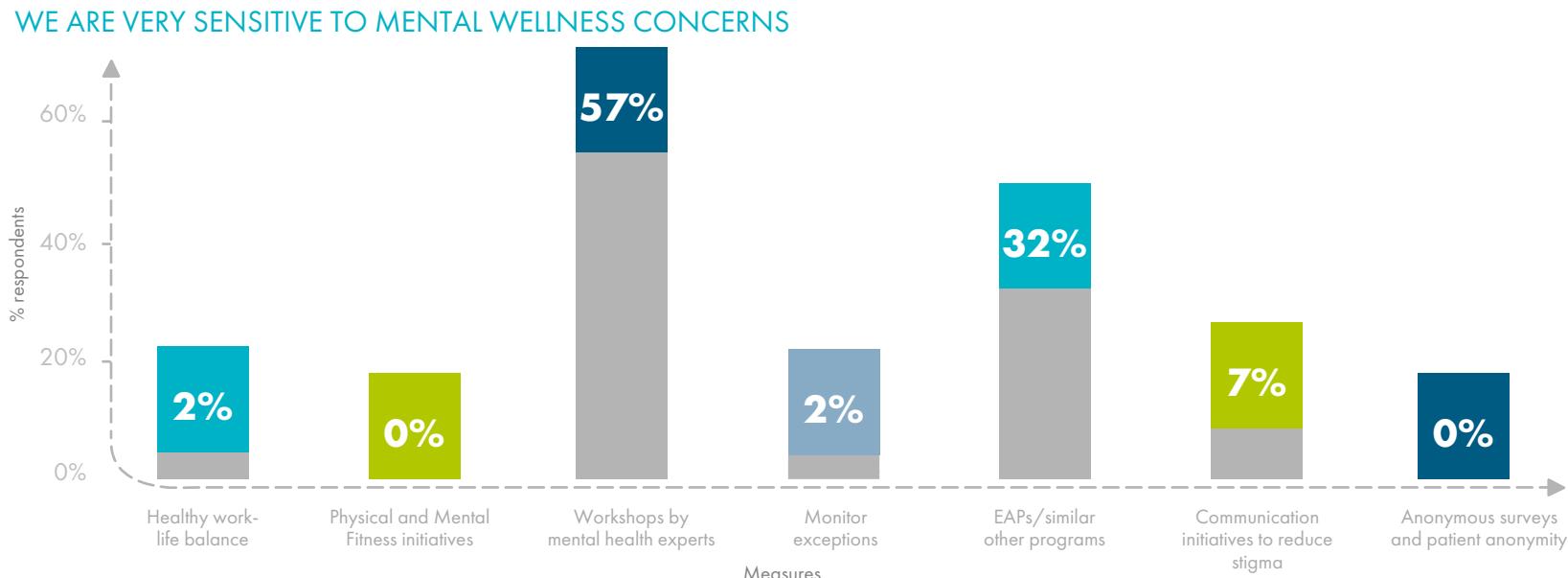


Fig-16: Employer Opinion: Measures implemented by “aware” employers aimed at being receptive to mental health concerns

Even within the "sensitive to mental wellness concerns" category, employers have not implemented as many Employee Assistance Programs as they should. At the lower end of the awareness spectrum, employers are seen to have implemented disproportionately more communication initiatives compared to a scant implementation of formal measures.

## Privacy of counselling and therapy - an all important consideration

### PRESENCE OF PRIVACY-ASSURED MECHANISMS

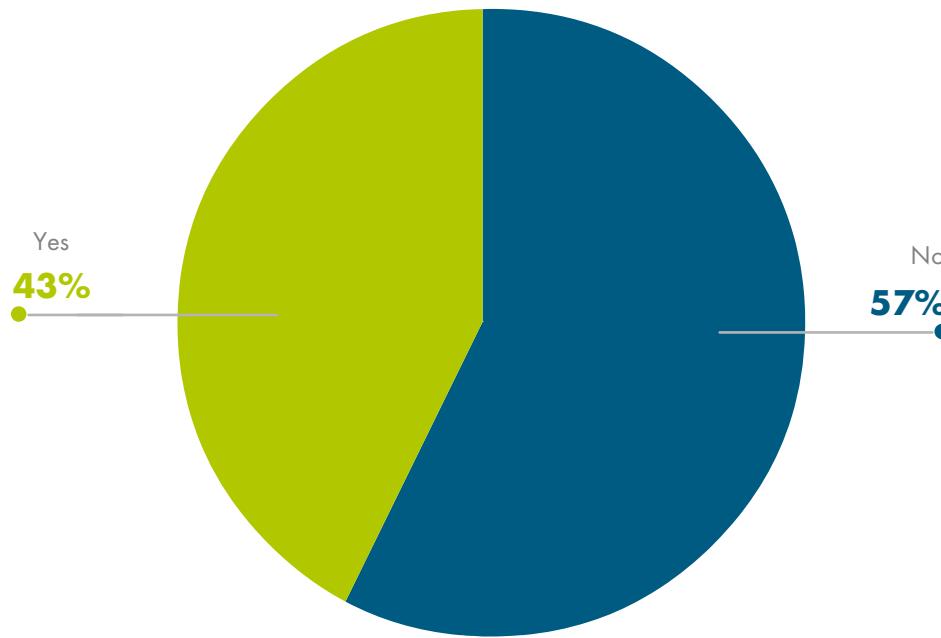


Fig-17: Presence of privacy assured mechanisms of access to counselling and therapy in organizations for affected employees.

### WHAT THE EXPERTS HAVE TO SAY

Employers can take two varied approaches to engaging with mental health experts, even while they take initiatives to minimize stigma. In either case, ensuring privacy for the individuals who access the expertise is a must.

- ▶ Engage an in-house therapist / counsellor and let the culture of openness build over time.
- ▶ Let people have anonymous access to designated therapists, at the therapists clinics, and away from the workplace.

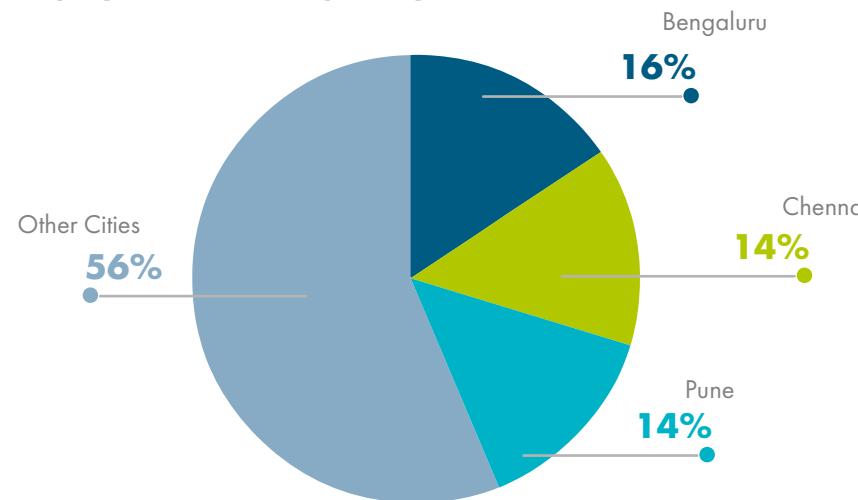


“ A critical requirement in effectively combating mental health issues is for organizations to recognize the stigma people attach to them. This recognition must translate into privacy assured access to counselling and therapy. 57% of the employers surveyed do not have this critical element incorporated into their wellness programs. Only 43% of the respondents facilitate private access to mental health experts for their employees.

## Privacy of counselling and therapy - an all important consideration

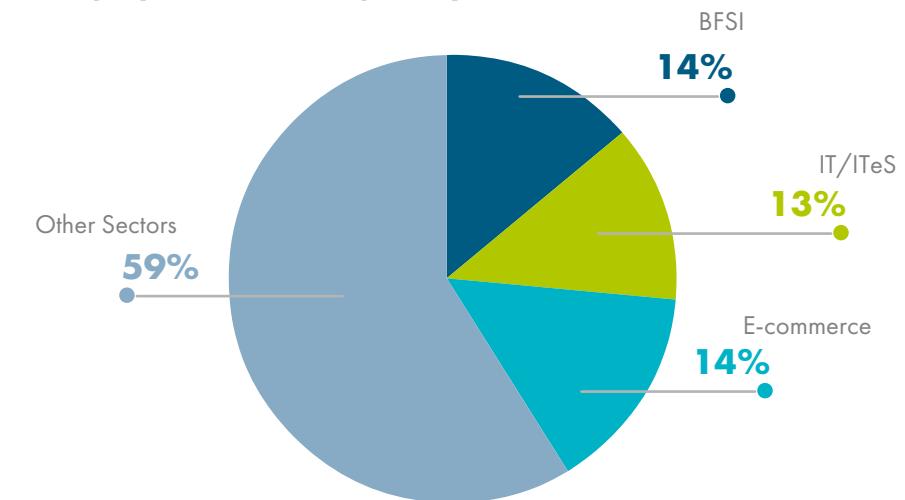
### CITY

#### Employers who have privacy assured mechanisms



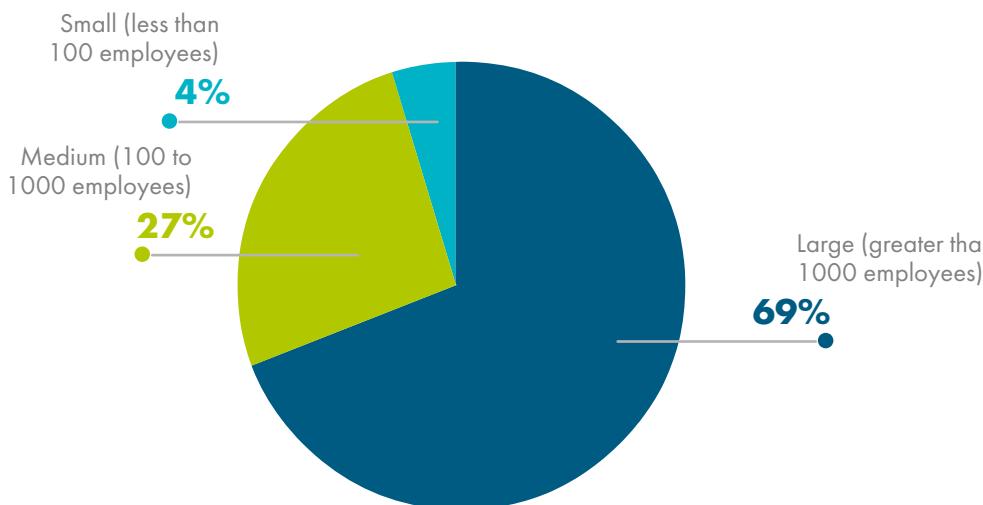
### SECTOR

#### Employers who have privacy assured mechanisms



### ORGANIZATIONAL SIZE

#### Employers who have privacy assured mechanisms



Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
 Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations

Bangalore, Chennai and Pune take the lead in having the highest proportion of employers who have instituted privacy assured mechanisms for affected employees to attend counselling and therapy sessions. Employers from BFSI, IT/ITeS and E-commerce and from large organizations lead on this count as well.

# AWARENESS levels among employees

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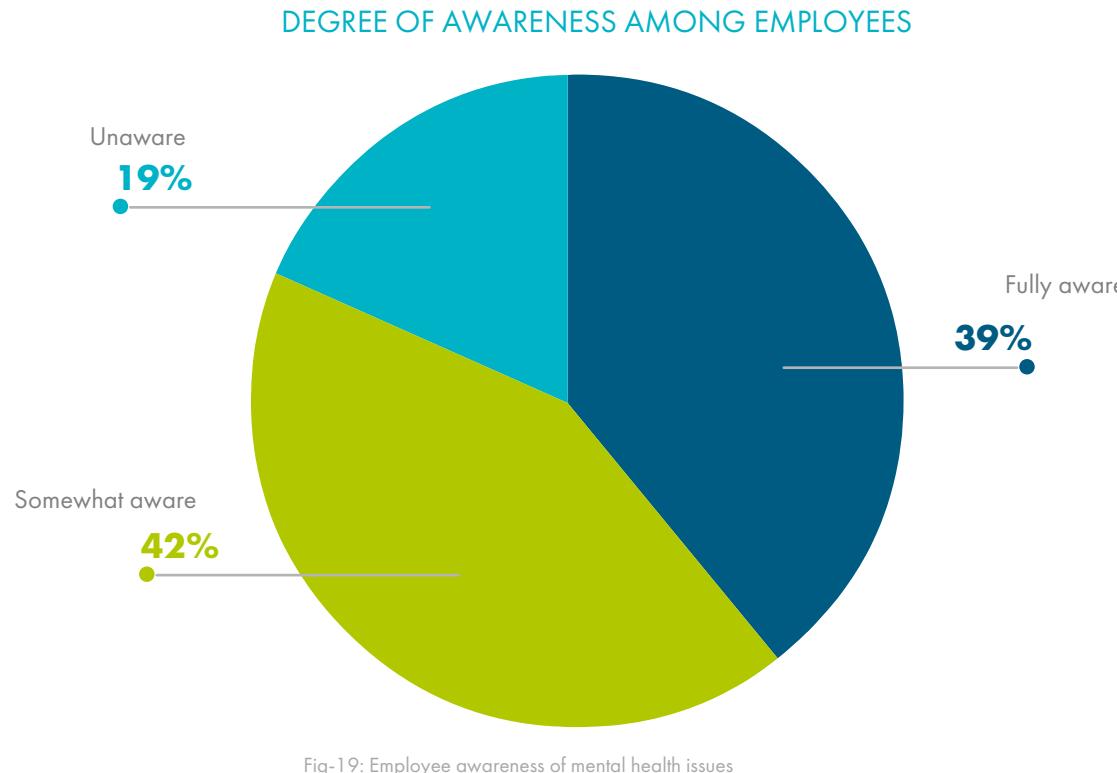
## Expert Speak

**What people do not know  
is what to do when they  
are angry, their workload  
is too much, or when they  
cannot unwind and are  
ruminating.**

**- Dr Shrradha Sidhwani**



## How aware and serious are employees about Mental Health



Awareness levels of mental health issues are quite fragmented among employees. 39% of the employees surveyed claim that they are “fully aware” of mental health issues. A marginally higher proportion (42%) state that they are somewhat aware, and 19% are completely unaware .

## How aware and serious are employees about Mental Health

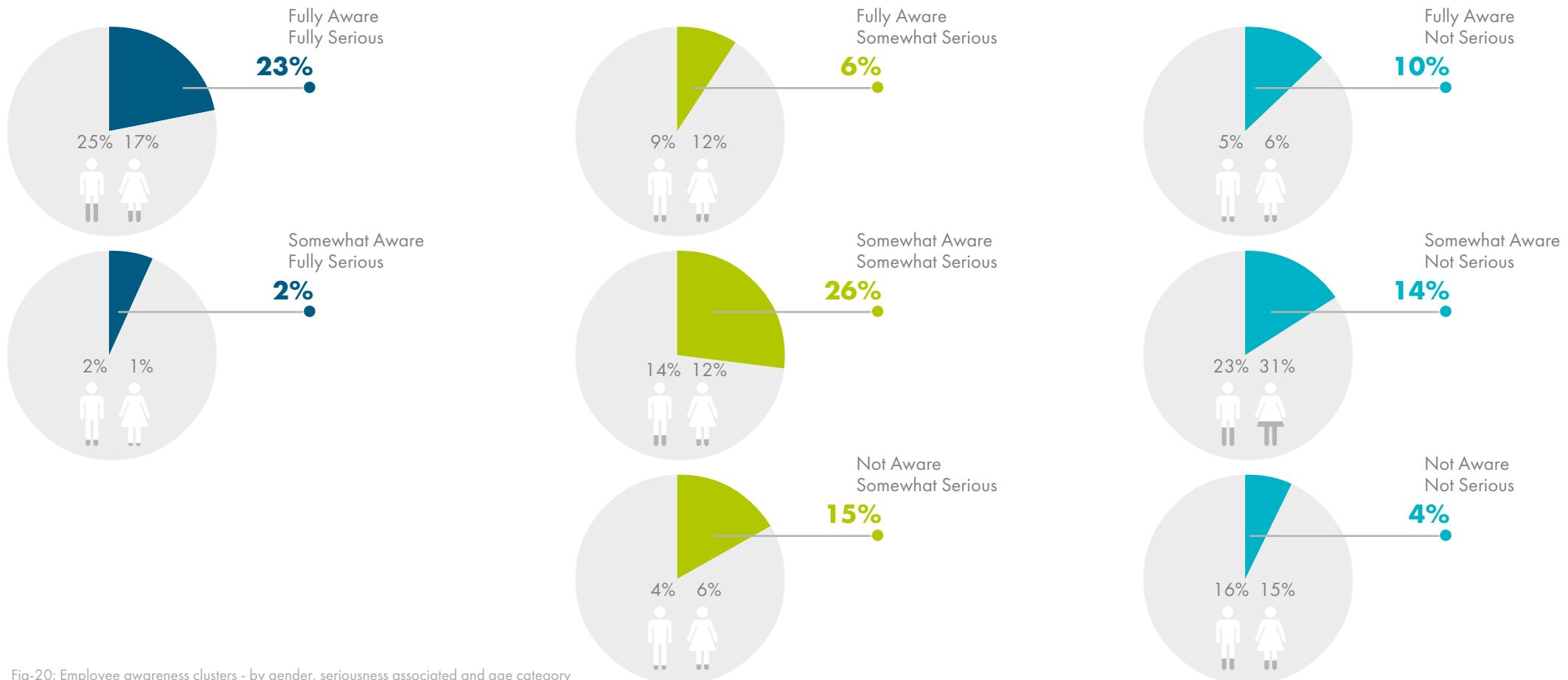


Fig-20: Employee awareness clusters - by gender, seriousness associated and age category

There is also a general lack of a sense of seriousness, despite 35% having experienced mental health issues - directly or via someone they know. 23% of the employees surveyed who claim to be "fully aware" and consider mental health issues as "fully serious" are an exception. As many as 47% - across awareness levels - believe mental health issues are a "somewhat serious" matter.

Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
 Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

Note: The percentages are all based on the overall sample size, and on the gender specific sample size for Male and Female

## Who do employees reach out to when in mental distress

### GO-TO PEOPLE FOR THE AFFECTED

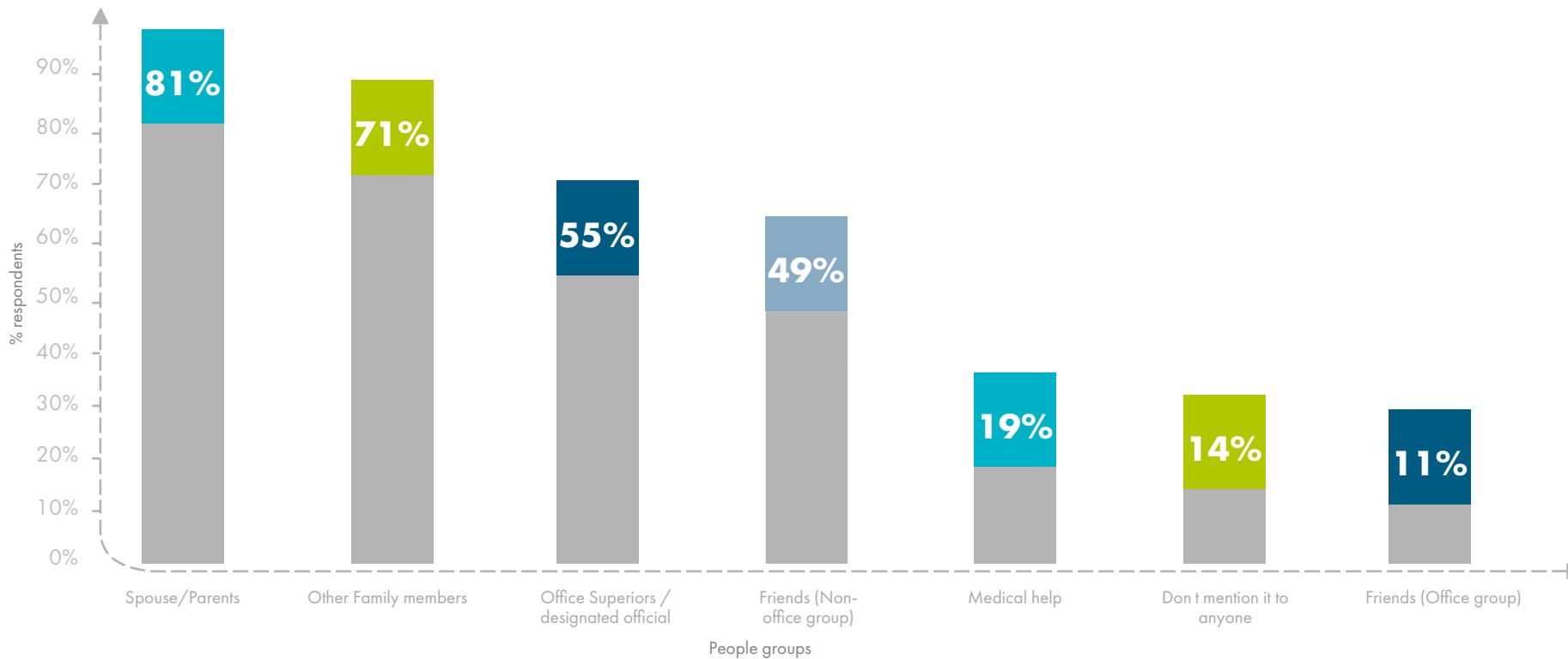


Fig-21: The go-to people for employees when they feel mentally distressed

A substantial proportion of employees report finding solace in family rather than friends or official help when they feel distressed. "Spouses / Parents" is the most preferred community employees would like to confide in, followed by "Other family members". Slightly more than half of the employees would also consider approaching "office superiors and designated officials", pushing down the category of "friends" by a small margin.

# Effectiveness of corporate mental health **INITIATIVES**

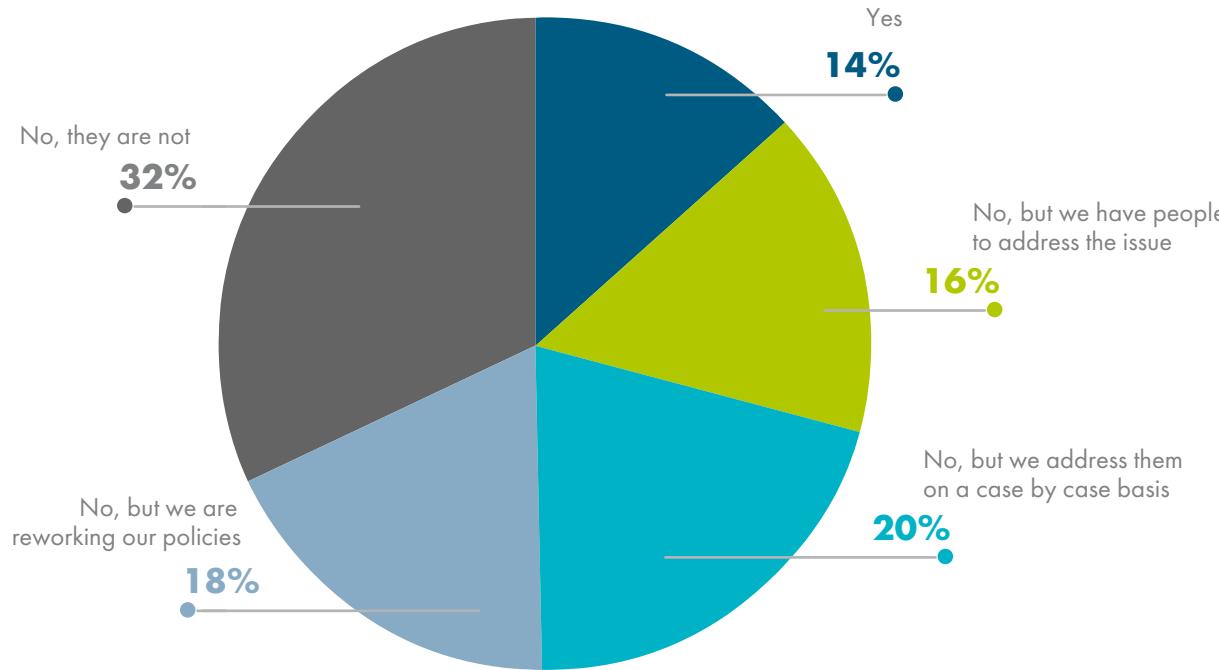
**Expert Speak**  
**Therapy is not  
guidance. It is a  
structured format of  
achieving goals.**

**- Dr Shrradha Sidhwani**



## Effectiveness of organizational policies and mechanisms

ARE EMPLOYER POLICIES AND MECHANISMS RECEPTIVE TO MENTAL WELLNESS CASES?



WHAT THE EXPERTS HAVE TO SAY

Organizations need to recognize that the success of policies depends upon two broad aspects.

- The awareness and willing participation of people. Policies need to simplify, facilitate and de-stigmatize the approach.
- Equipping HR managers with basic psychological concepts, if not skills, and with the ability to carry out psychological first-aid.



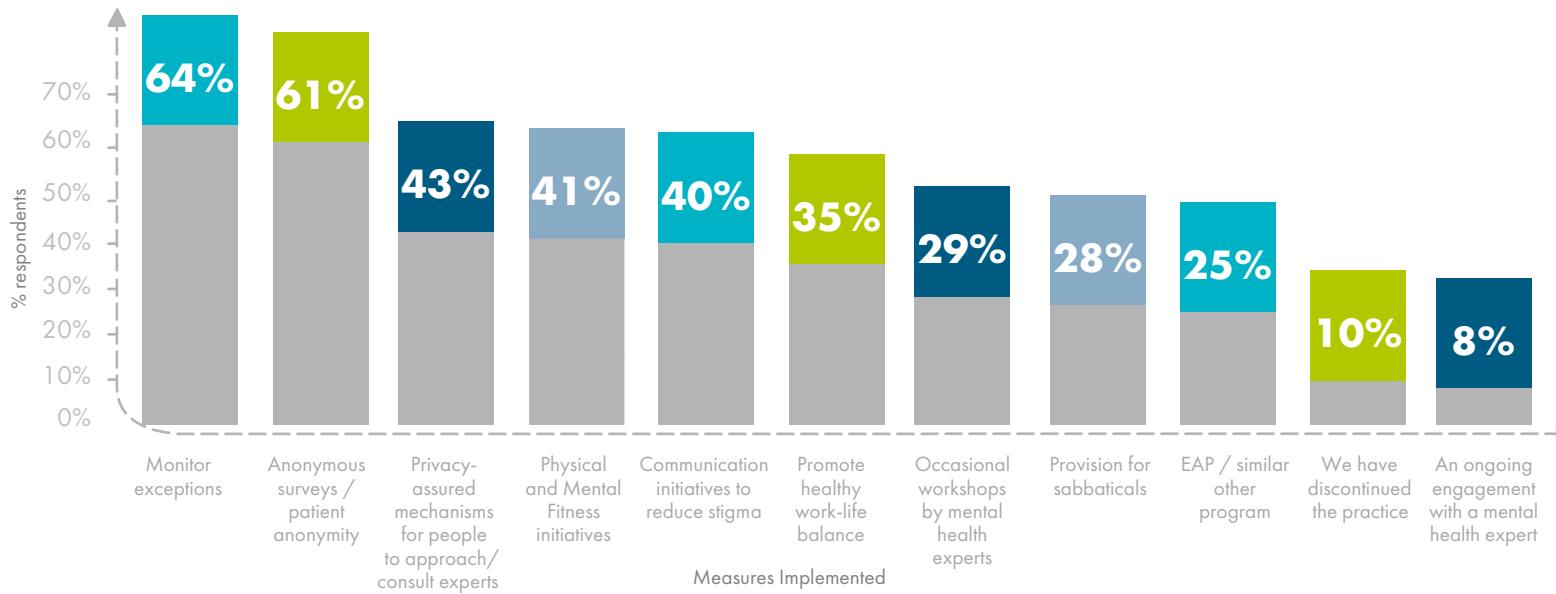
Fig-22: Employer Opinion: How effective, employers believe, are organizational policies and mechanisms in being receptive to mental health concerns?

Organizational policies and mechanisms do not effectively address mental health concerns in an overwhelming majority of cases. Only 14% of the employers surveyed were found to have policies and mechanisms receptive to mental wellness cases. 54% of the respondents have not put formal policies and mechanisms in place and deal with mental wellness concerns in their informal ways.

Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

## Addressing mental health issue - fulfillment and gaps

### EMPLOYER OPINION



There appears to be a substantial gap between employer and employee perceptions of the fulfilment of measures in organizations. Employee opinion on the measures implemented falls significantly short on almost all the measures, with "Communication initiatives to reduce stigma" being the lone exception. Employees seem to believe that employers do not do as much as they claim.

### EMPLOYER OPINION

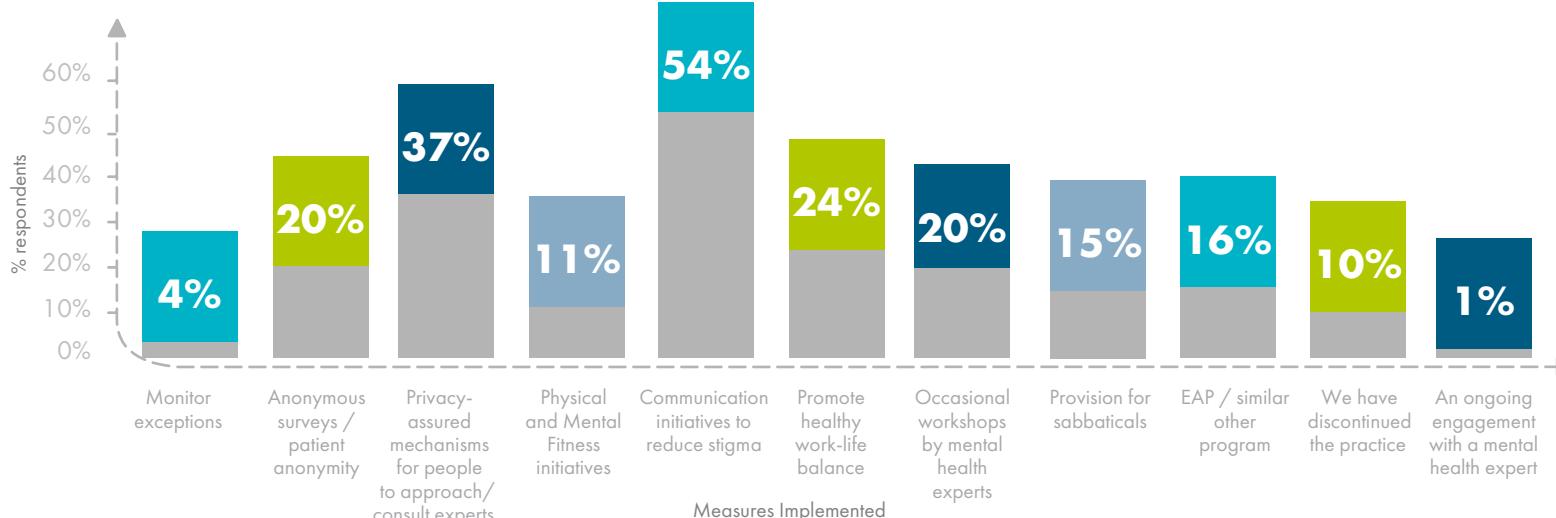


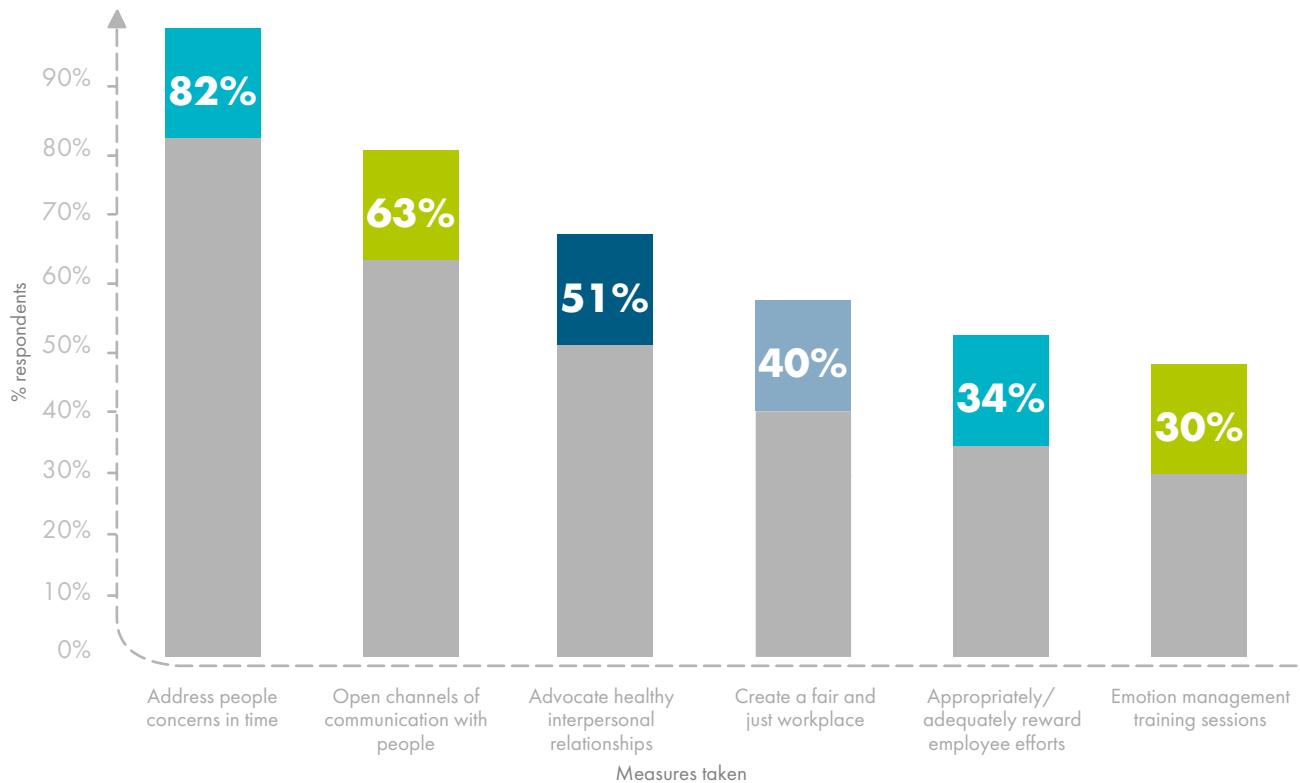
Fig-23: Measures implemented - employee versus employer opinion

Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

Note: the percentages add up to more than 100 since each respondent is allowed multiple responses

## Measures of proactive mental healthcare

### PREVENTIVE STEPS BY EMPLOYERS



Despite the shortcomings in taking awareness towards action, employers display keenness in transforming their mental wellness initiatives into proactive measures. A large proportion of the employers surveyed (82%) are sensitizing their organizations to be receptive to mental health concerns. 63% are opening up multiple channels for people to speak up, and 51% encourage healthy interpersonal equations between people.

Fig-24: Steps employers have taken to be proactive with their mental wellness initiatives

### WHAT THE EXPERTS HAVE TO SAY

#### Steps to proactivity:

- ▶ Step-1: Train HR managers in identifying mental health issues, providing psychological first-aid, making the employee family part of the process, and helping remove the associated taboo.
- ▶ Step-2 (best practices instituted and reputation for sensitivity built): Carry out annual psychometric tests / psychological analysis.
- ▶ Prerequisite to being proactive: organizations need to couple mental wellbeing with profits as part of their purpose.



Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

Note: the percentages add up to more than 100 since each respondent is allowed multiple responses

## How effective is the existing set of measures: employee perspective

### EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EXISTING SETUP

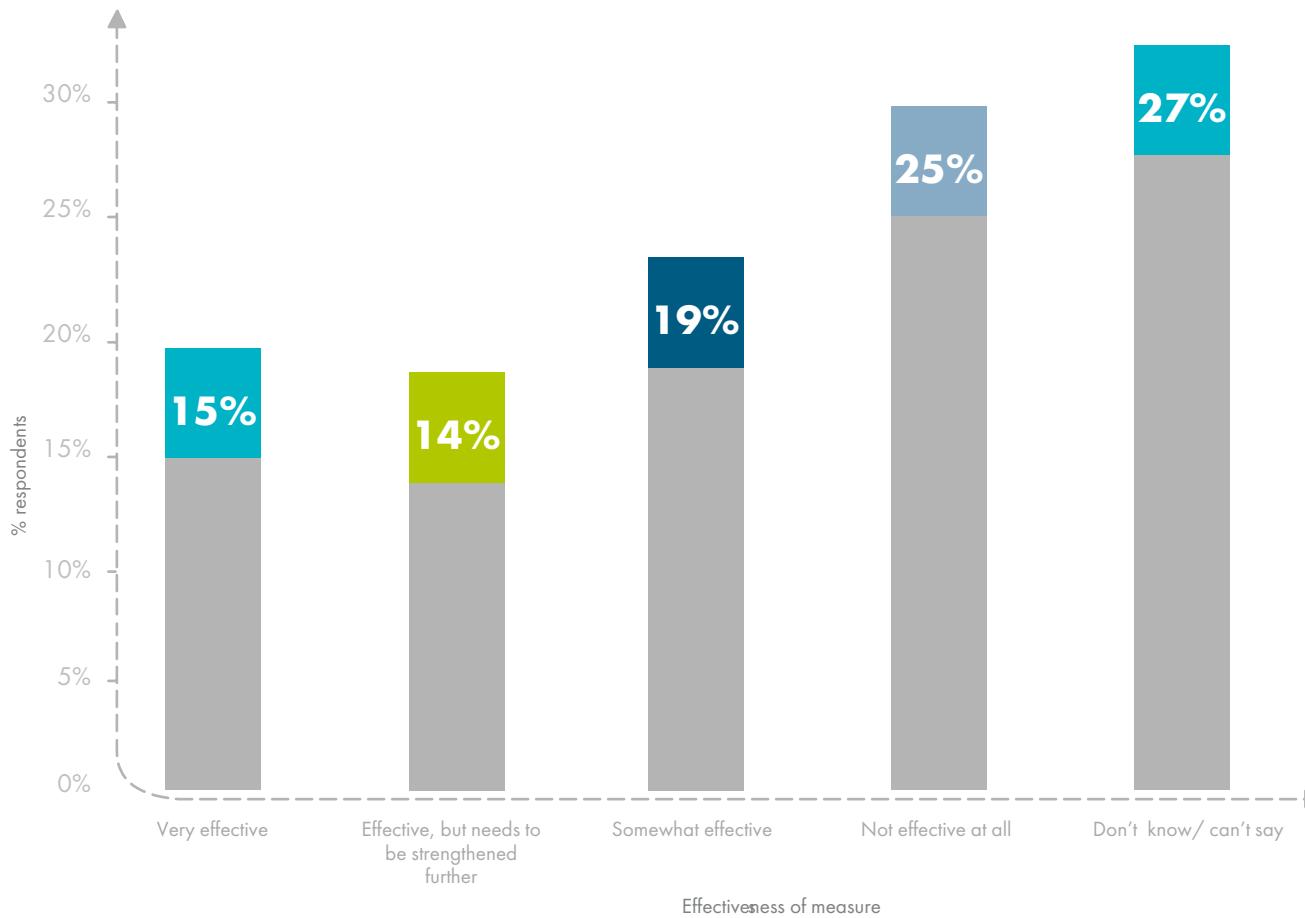


Fig-25: Effectiveness of the existing set up

Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
 Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

Employee perception of the effectiveness of organizational initiatives paints a rather dismal picture. 15% of all employees claim to be working in organizations that have implemented "very effective" measures. 33% of the respondents are unclear about the effectiveness of the set up in their organizations. The remainder is not too satisfied with the effectiveness of measures where they work.

# Spotlight: The COVID-19 impact

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## Expert Speak

**Covid-19 has been a double-edged sword people suffered, but taboo of mental health is being diminished and awareness has leapfrogged.**

- Dr Sagar Mundada



## COVID-19 impact: an inflection point for mental wellness

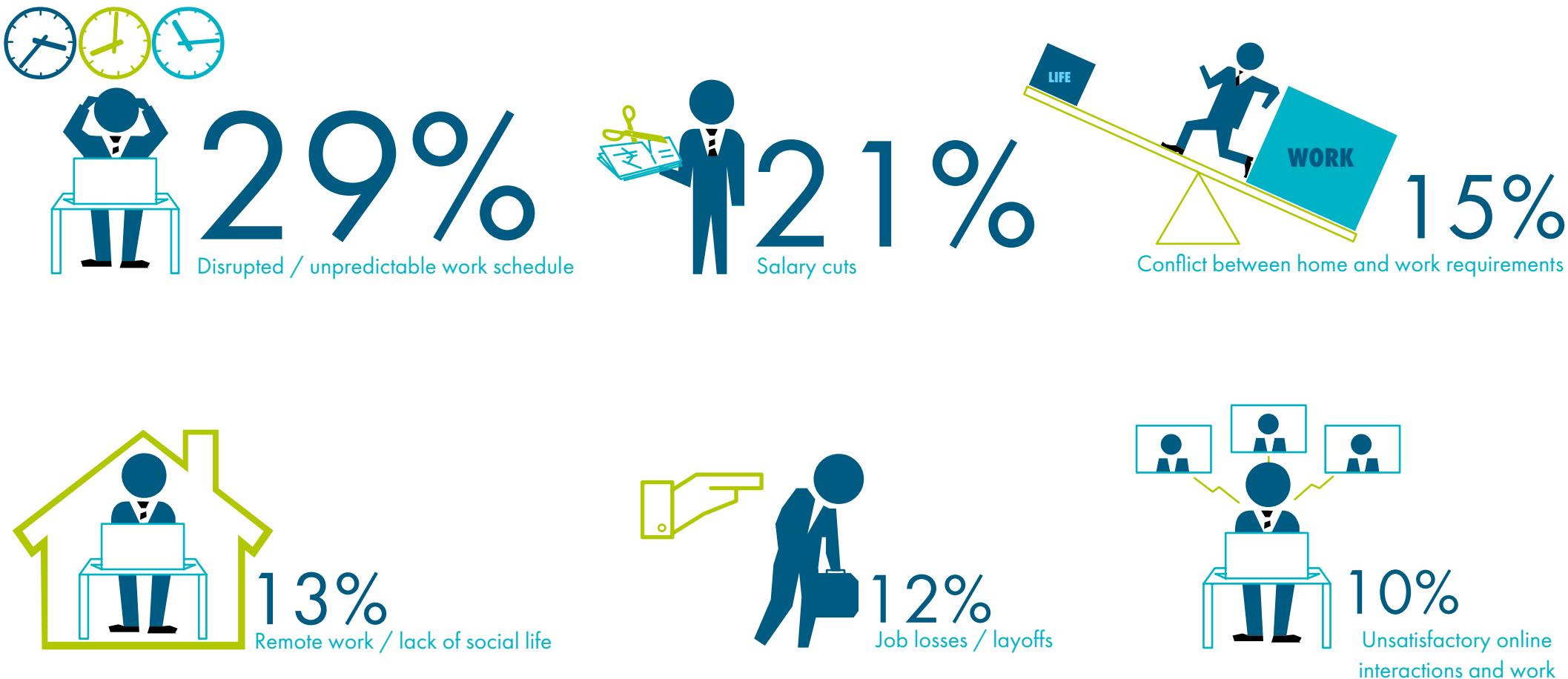
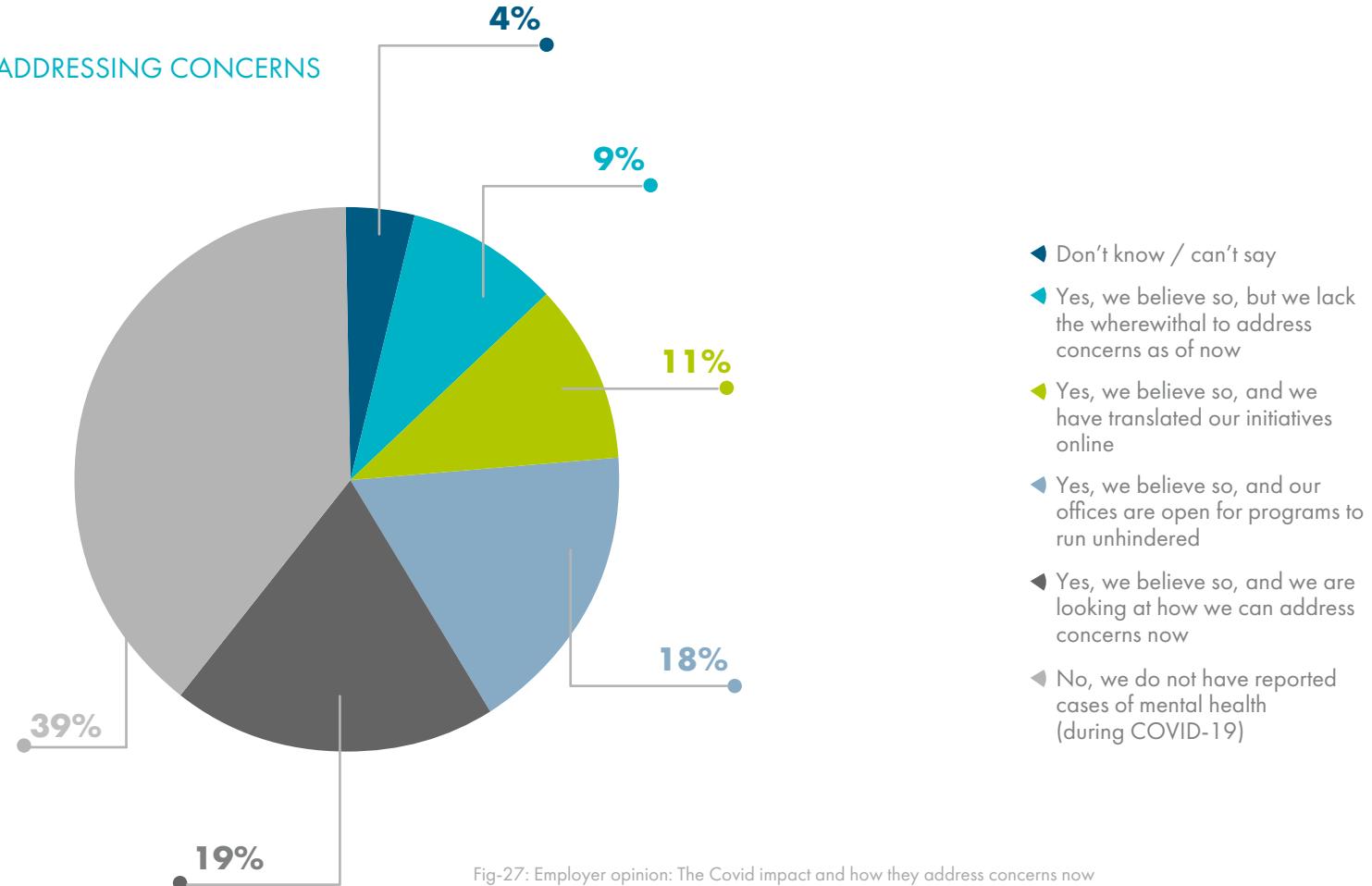


Fig-26: Employee perception: The Covid impact

The uncertainty and disruption Covid-19 brought about imposed a heavy toll on physical and mental health. Employees report having faced various issues that affected mental health during the pandemic (especially during the lockdown period). The widespread sense of mental disquiet served as a wake-up call for the world as a whole and the corporate sector in particular.

## COVID-19 impact: an inflection point for mental wellness

### COVID-19 IMPACT AND ADDRESSING CONCERN



The contingency did affect organizations to the point of being a serious call-for-action. And, 48% of the employers surveyed reported having taken cognizance of mental wellness concerns. Of this, 29% believe they have been able to identify issues and provide an appropriate form of assistance. While the rest are at various stages of inadequacy, 9% of the employers seem helpless in this regard.

Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
 Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

## Roadblocks to mental wellness



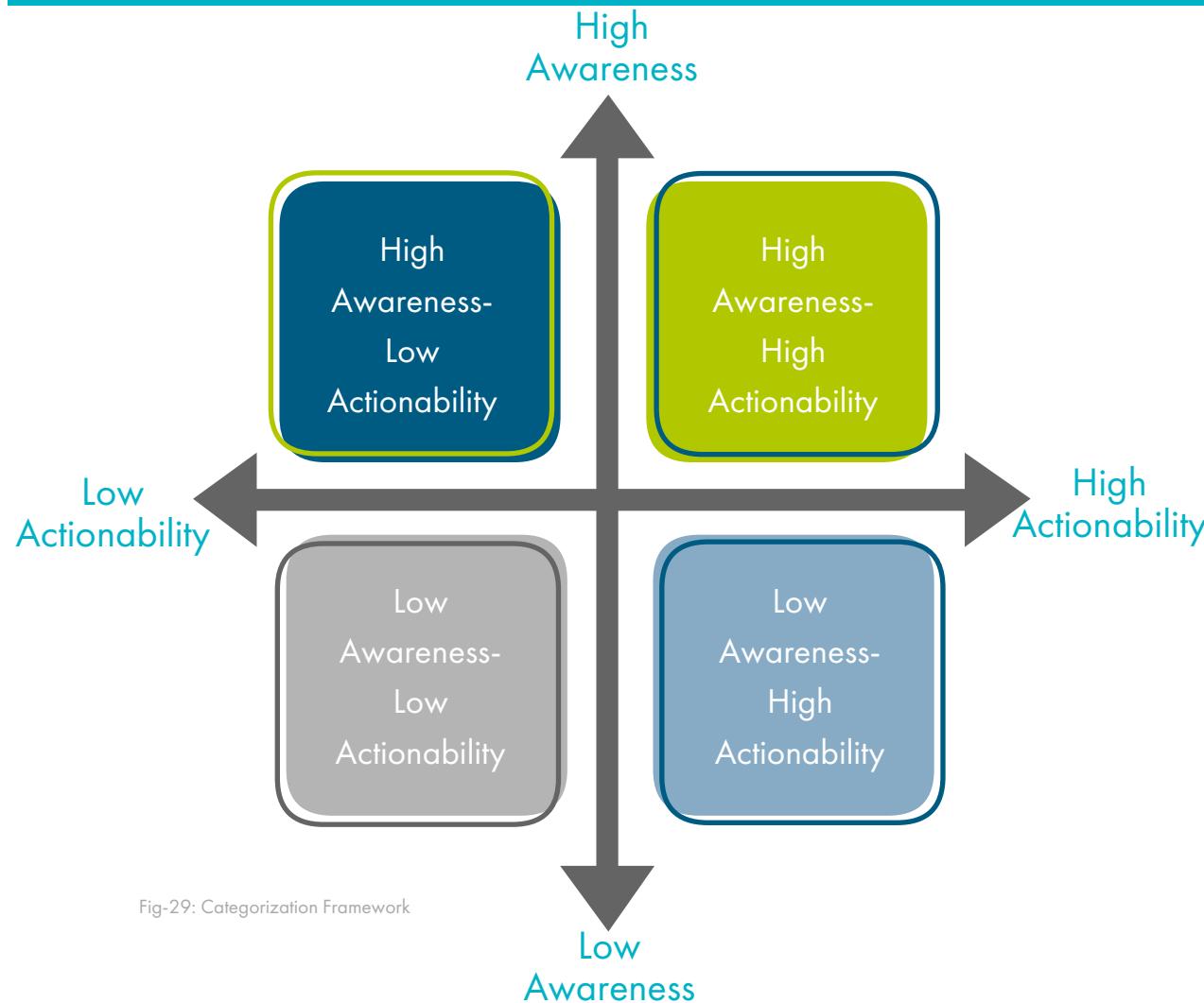
Fig-28: What challenges / roadblocks prevent employers from supporting mental wellness concerns?

Stigma, which has a chilling effect on speaking up, is the biggest obstacle for employers in the path to mental wellness. 29% of the employers surveyed report being constrained by hesitant employees not voicing their concerns. The concern being solely HR manager's / department's and none else's, and people unwilling to participate, ties down 16% - 19% of employers.



# Respondent categorization by **AWARENESS** and **ACTIONABILITY**

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### Scoring dimensions



The study profiles sectors and cities based on how aware employers are about mental health issues, and how progressive they are in implementing mental wellness initiatives. Survey responses pertaining to these parameters have been scored (as per the logic provided above) and respondents grouped into four categories.

## CATEGORY POPULATION

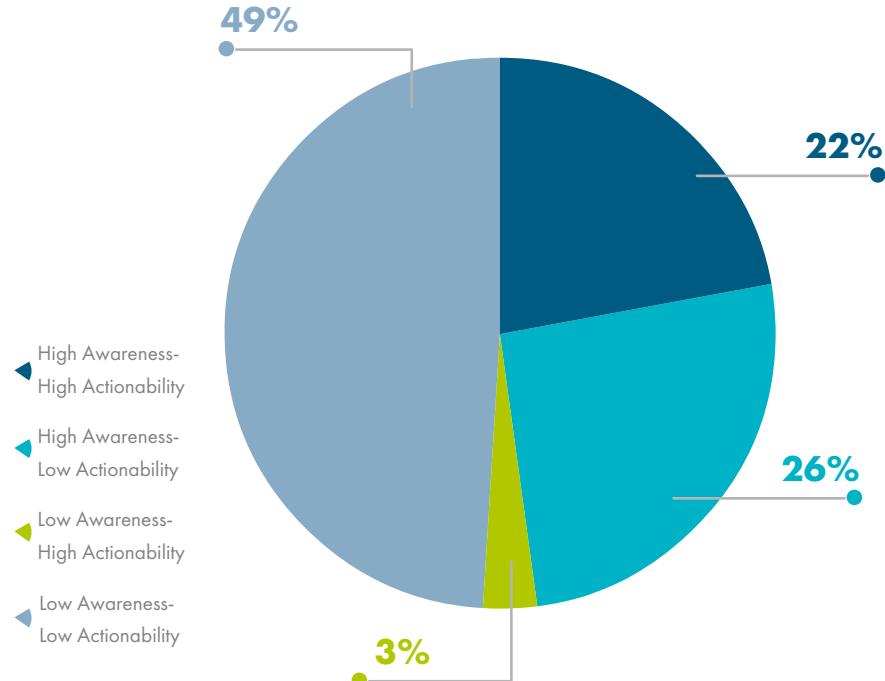


Fig-30: How respondents populate the categories

## SECTOR &amp; CITY CATEGORIZATION

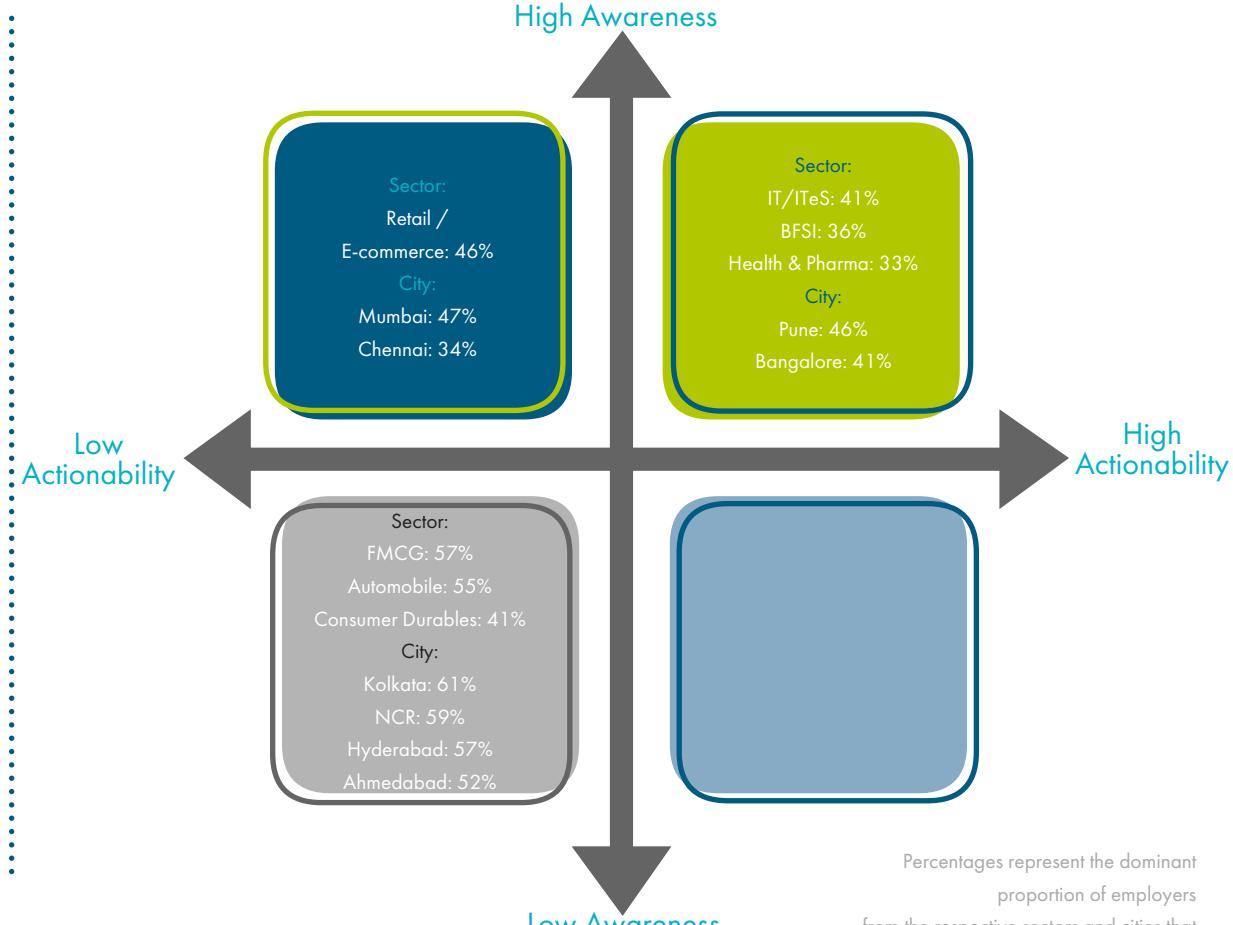


Fig-31: How sectors and cities populate the categories

Sectors and cities that populate the high awareness + high actionability quadrant are leaders in addressing mental health issues. And those populating the low awareness + low actionability quadrant are considered laggards. The remaining are considered to be gradually transitioning towards the high awareness + high actionability quadrant.

# CONCLUSIONS

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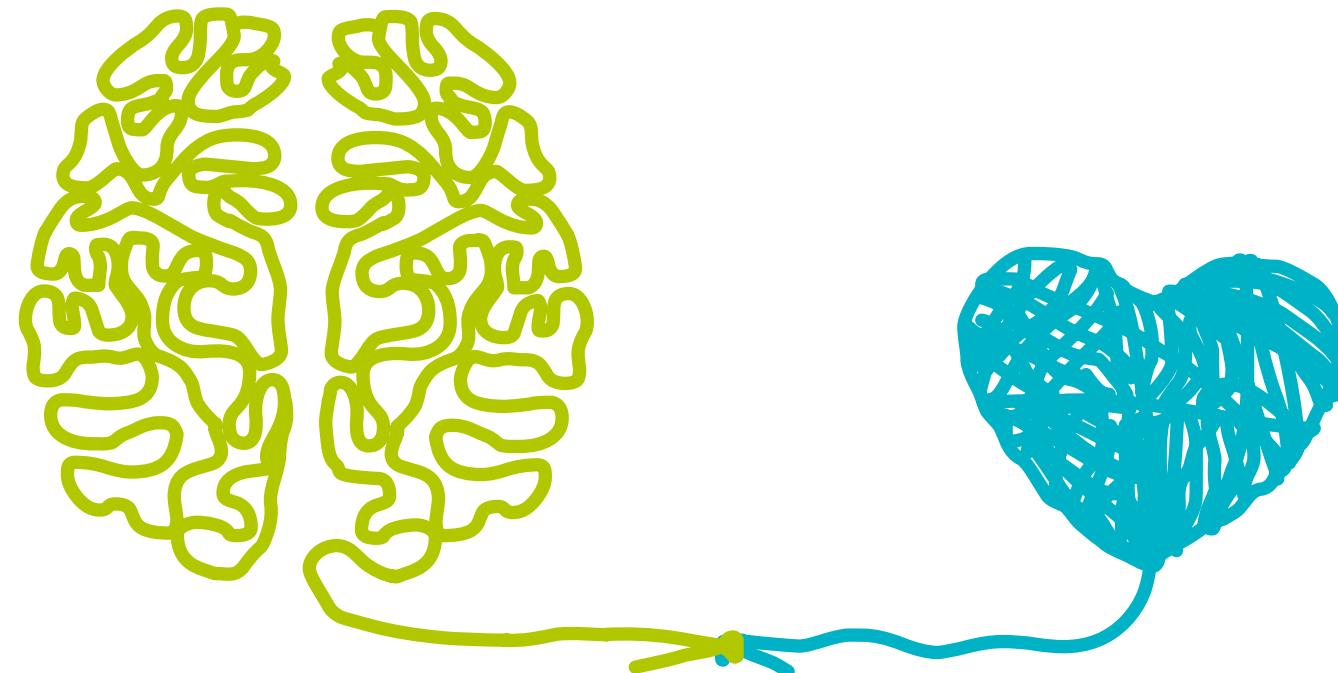


## 3 KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ Employers are not just acutely aware about mental health issues, but they also believe that mental health has a "serious" and "significant" impact on organizational performance and growth.
- ▶ Except for 13% of all employers surveyed, even those considering mental wellness to be an important issue have only taken informal measures and have no formal policies to address mental wellness.
- ▶ Employers not closing the gap between awareness and action, employees not perceiving it to be a serious issue, and the stigma surrounding mental health, have rendered organizational initiatives largely ineffective.



- There is an urgent need for a shared understanding between employers and employees of the causal factors and influencers of mental health issues. This shared understanding should drive formal organizational policies and measures. Despite widespread awareness the approach by employers to addressing mental wellness is predominantly informal. Communication initiatives and wellness programs are necessary to establish open channels, counter bias and reduce stigma, but not sufficient to combat mental health issues. Therapy and counselling, supported by privacy-assured access to experts, are indispensable components of a formal, policy-led approach to mental wellness.
- Organizations comprehend and appreciate the impact mental health issues have on individual lives, organizational performance and growth. This understanding does not seem to be percolating into organizational policies related to employee wellness. Two roadblocks, as pointed out by respondents - lack of leadership buy-in and mental wellness being the sole responsibility of the HR department - may be hindering the inclusion of mental wellness in policy making. Decoding and quantifying the linkage between mental wellness and organizational performance and growth, could help make a business case for policy inclusion.
- At the lower end of the awareness spectrum there are substantial gaps between employer awareness, importance accorded, and action. Inadequate awareness on part of the employees serves to make matters worse. On one hand, affected employees may not speak up because of the stigma surrounding the topic and, on the other, employers may not appreciate the need for formal approaches and patient privacy. An overarching mass-awareness drive by the government and educational courses on psychology for HR professionals could aid in increasing awareness and provide actionable pointers to employers.



- Among both employers and employees, only a small proportion believes that the policies and measures instituted have been receptive to and effective in addressing mental health concerns. The unorganized nature of addressing mental wellness, along with the myths and misconceptions perpetuated in society, may lead employers to devise poorly planned initiatives. Absence of bottom-up communication channels may mean a poor fit between real problems faced by employees and the solutions deployed. Industry associations and HR practitioners could help employers adopt mental wellness best practices.
- Covid-19 has effected a paradigm shift in the recognition of the disease, the receptivity of organizations, multichannel mechanisms to address concerns, ease of access to mental health experts and the resultant dilution of stigma. Employers need to have an active dialogue with employees and take stock of the several concerns the past year has brought out. Organizations could engage specialists and mental health experts to address these concerns and formulate long term solutions. The pandemic is a wake-up call for employers to sensitize their organizations and formalize their mental wellness approach.



## Annexure-1:

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# EXPERT OPINION EXTRACTS



## Dr Sagar Mundada

Common mental health issues at workplaces



Depression, isolation, stress, anxiety, personality conflicts, smoking / alcoholism and substance use / abuse - eventually result in burnout. People switch jobs or even quit altogether.

Adverse interpersonal and family relationships.

Low awareness of the importance of mental health issues among HR professionals. A barrier to awareness is the taboo. People associating "mental health" with serious ailments such as schizophrenia propagates the taboo.

Covid-19 impact on mental health and therapy



Covid-19 has disrupted sleep cycles, increased anxiety due to job insecurity and depression due to social isolation.

However, it has diminished fear and taboo, and has increased awareness and accessibility.

Opportunity for proactive organizations to design interventions that help people transform into the "best versions of themselves".

Barriers to implement mental healthcare



In general, the approach to mental healthcare among Indian corporates is unorganized, and many do not allocate budgets.

Regardless of business size the tendency to just pay lip service to the cause is widespread.

Accessibility is a formidable barrier. There are just about 4,000 mental health professionals to cater to a billion people. Also, what compounds the problem for an individual is allowing an issue to fester and approaching a therapist when the issue has turned severe.

## Dr Sagar Mundada

What role  
Corporate  
India can  
play



HR managers must be trained in  
> Identifying issues  
> Providing psychological first-aid  
> Making family part of the process  
> Removing the taboo

Start with small steps  
> Basic stress management  
> Identifying mental health issues  
> Increasing empathy, resilience and mindfulness

Add a small leap of faith: enable anonymous access to therapists

Add proactivity: annual psychometric tests / psychological analysis.

Dr Sagar Mundada is a psychiatrist, sexologist, deaddiction specialist, sales psychology and emotional wellness trainer based in Mumbai. He is MBBS and MD (Psychiatry) from J J Group of Hospitals, Mumbai.



## Dr Shradha Sidhwani

### Defining mental illness



Mental illness is a whole class of unhealthy emotions - such as agitation, depression, personality disorders, obsessions, compulsions, a range of somatic conditions, and sexual disorders.

Mental health is all about dealing with unhealthy emotions and coming to a spectrum of healthier emotions. For example, from depression to sadness, and from anxiety to concern.

Most people are working for external motivators - pay checks, social validation, boss's appreciation, high appraisals and bonuses. And a lack of motivation is all too pervasive.

### Common mental health issues at workplaces



Rates of exhaustion and frustration have soared. Social validation related disorders are rampant.

Even educated professionals who are aware of mental health neglect early symptoms and feel that psychological intervention is not for them. This is a sort of a denial / defence mechanism.

The emerging theme is that people want to redefine what they have been doing.

### Barriers to implement mental healthcare



Laws can empower people to speak up. Sensitization and psycho-education is also key. An organization needs to build a fostering culture.

The emphasis on physical wellness and the relative de-emphasis of mental wellness is apparent in the way people do not take leaves when they feel depressed, women are unable to talk about menopausal or pre-menstrual issues.

The acceptance and integration into the corporate culture of the fact that we all undergo stress and it is part of one's mental makeup is very important, but it has been ignored over time.

## Dr Shrradha Sidhwani

What role  
Corporate  
India can  
play



Therapy is a structured format of achieving goals. Wellness programs are not therapy. They are superficial, cannot be classified as therapy and they cannot address issues such as anxiety, depression and interpersonal skills.

Compassion fatigue is very pervasive in the corporate sector. Does one have the ability and willingness to engage with another person from the latter's point of view?

The bottom-line is that organizations have purpose and need to couple mental wellbeing with profits as part of their purpose.

Dr Shrradha Sidhwani is a certified Psychologist & Psychotherapist practicing in Mumbai. She is certified from the Rehabilitation Council of India, is formally trained in Rational Emotive Behavioural therapy and is an Associate Fellow and Supervisor from the AEI Institute, USA.



## Dr Vijay Bhaskar

Defining mental illness



Stress is not just a negative factor, as is perceived by people. one needs a minimal level of stress (Eustress) to be functional.

Studies have shown a strong correlation between mental health and quality of life.

Most people are working for external motivators - pay checks, social validation, boss's appreciation, high appraisals and bonuses. And a lack of motivation is all too pervasive.

Modern trends and mental health



Although India is the human capital provider of the world, we have not adopted global standards of work and wellbeing. The cultural shift has not percolated fully. We are unable to balance our traditions with global practices of work. So, human adaptability to the change has not been factored in.

Education, in general, should emphasize on psychological and humanitarian aspects on technical aspects.

Covid-19 impact on mental health and therapy



Reverse migration helped people have support systems that lessened the burden of the lockdown, especially when coupled with working from home and bought people time with near and dear ones. In a way, back to their cultural roots.

In general working from home meant more time for self-care and healthier, home cooked food.

Covid-19 has effectively diminished the negative perception associated with psychological therapy.

## Dr Vijay Bhaskar

What role  
Corporate  
India can  
play



Employers must regard themselves as responsible for maintaining harmony amongst all stakeholders of the organization - most importantly, with employees.

HR should become employee-centric rather than employer-oriented. Organizations must empower people with bottom-up communication.

Shift work is detrimental and dramatically alters the biological clock. The concept of shift work is to be rethought. It impacts personality and quality of life, and causes burnout.

Dr Vijay Bhaskar is a Post Doctoral Scientist from the Department of Psychology, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam. He is M.A, MBA, PGDY (Yoga), M. Phil and PhD in psychology (I/O Psychology) from Andhra University.



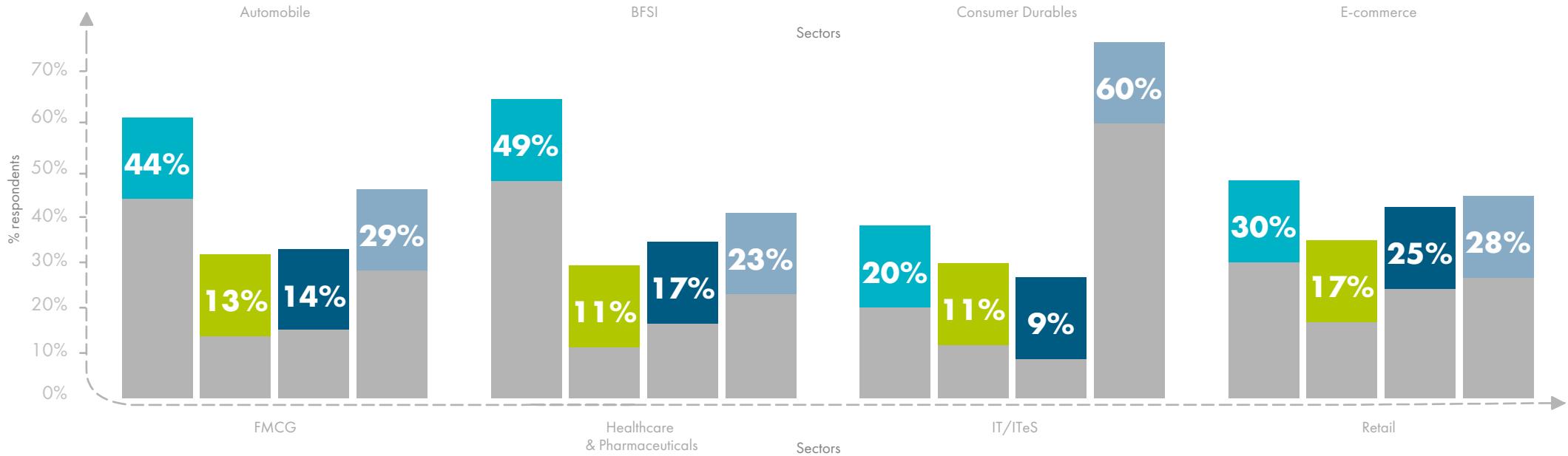
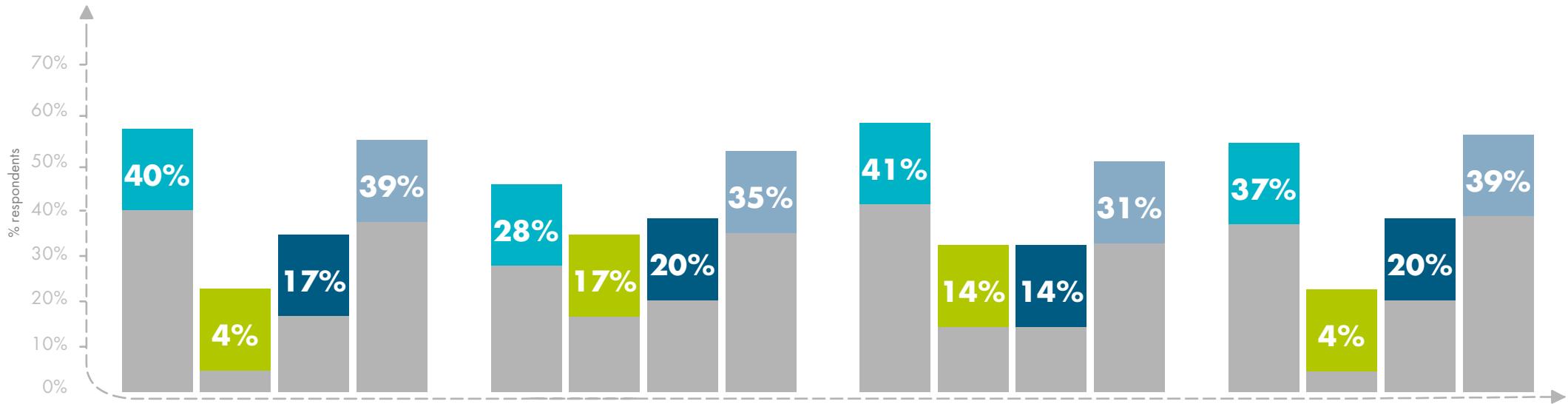
## Annexure-2:

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## MORE FINDINGS



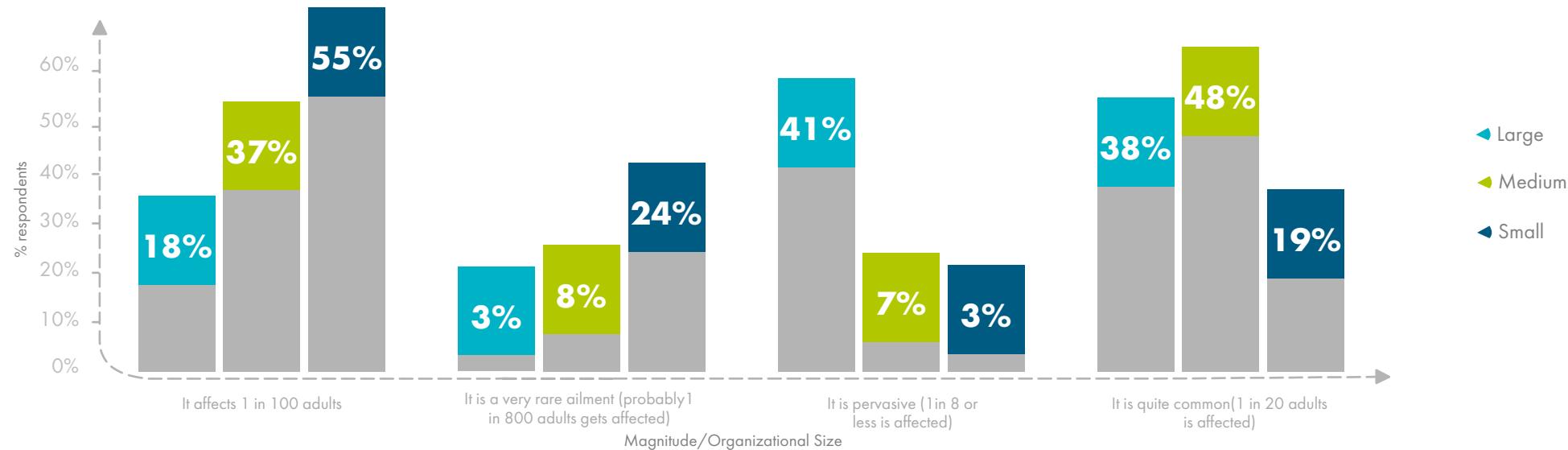
## MAGNITUDE OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES ACCORDING TO EMPLOYERS - SECTORS



◆ It affects 1 in 100 adults ◆ It is a very rare ailment (probably 1 in 800 adults gets affected) ◆ It is pervasive (1 in 8 or less is affected) ◆ It is quite common (1 in 20 adults is affected)

Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

## MAGNITUDE OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES ACCORDING TO EMPLOYERS - ORGANIZATIONAL SIZE

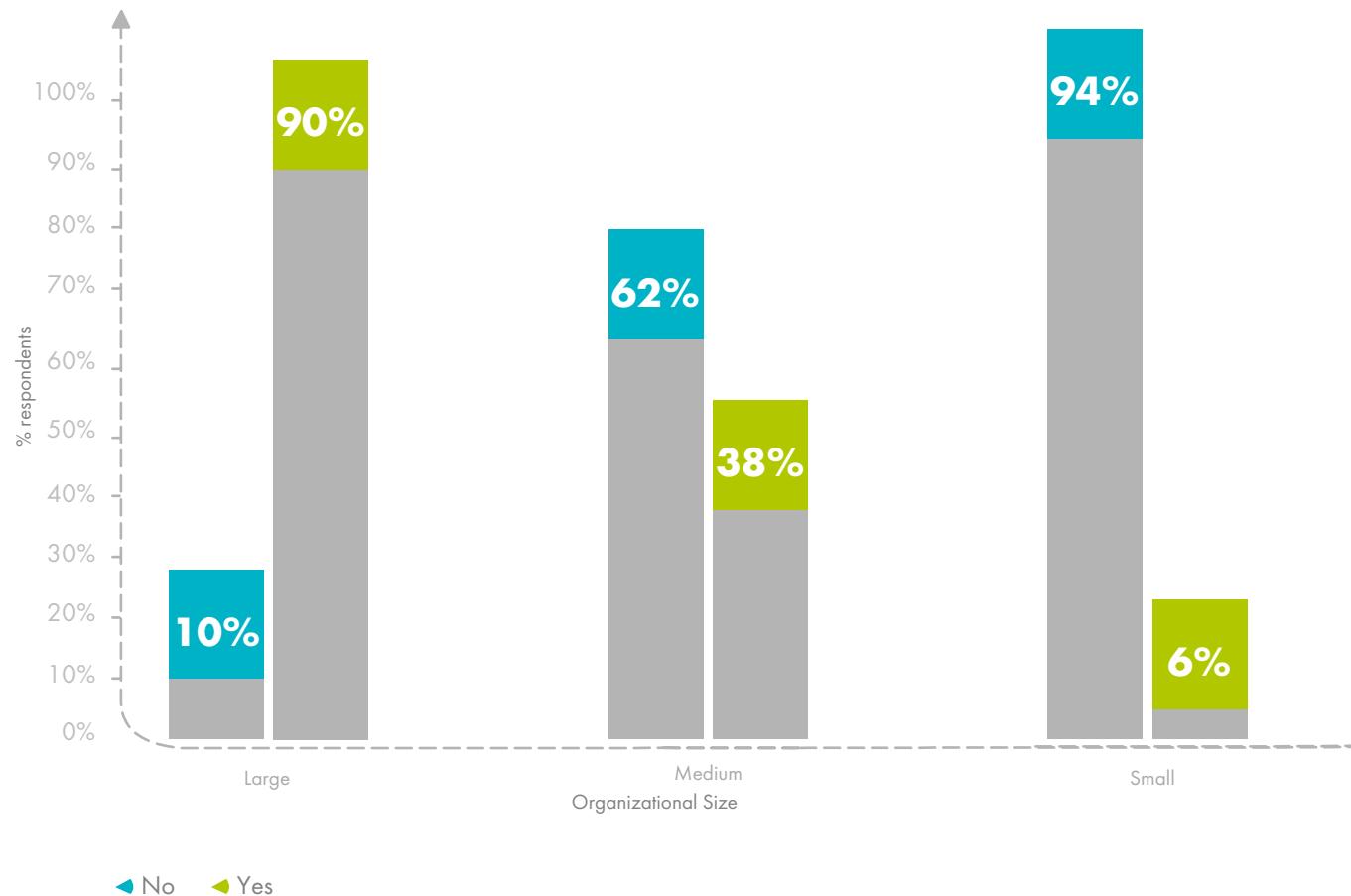


## IS MENTAL HEALTH PART OF YOUR EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAM - SECTORS



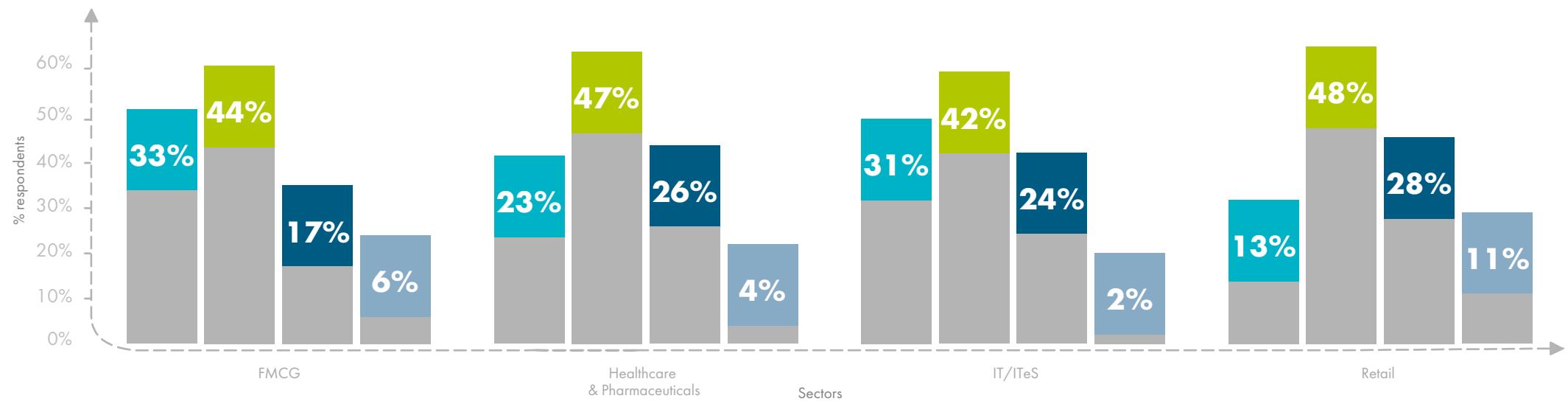
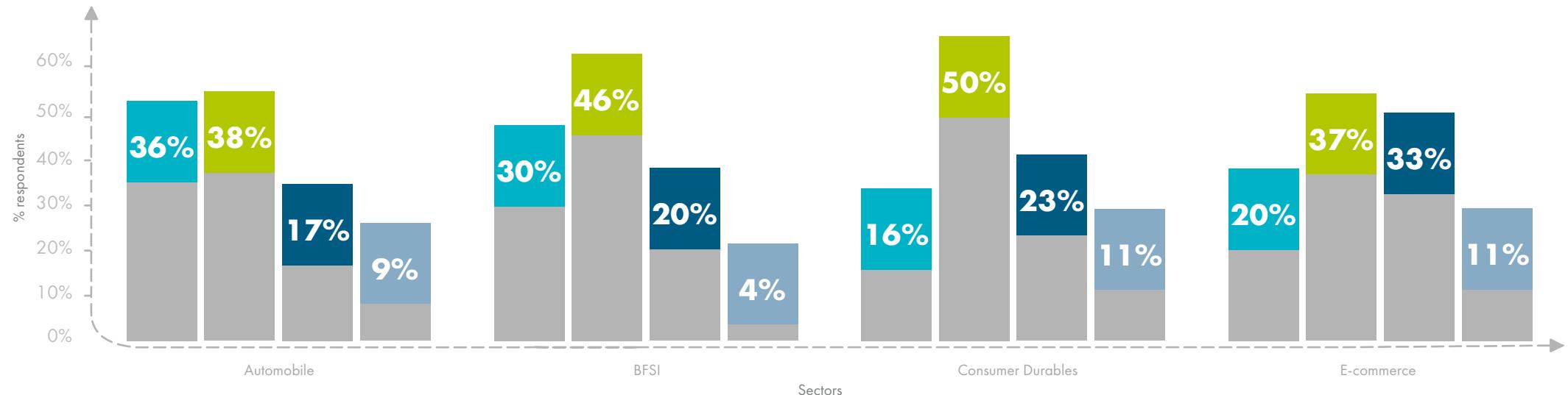
Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
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## IS MENTAL HEALTH PART OF YOUR EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAM - ORGANIZATIONAL SIZE



Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
 Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

## IMPACT OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE - SECTORS



◆ It could seriously affect organizational performance and even growth

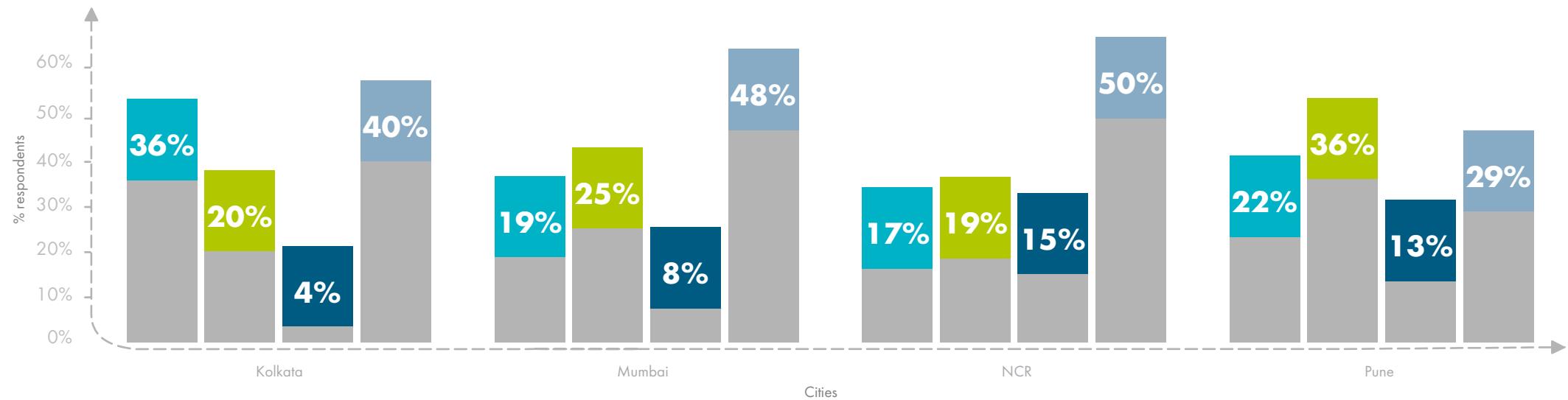
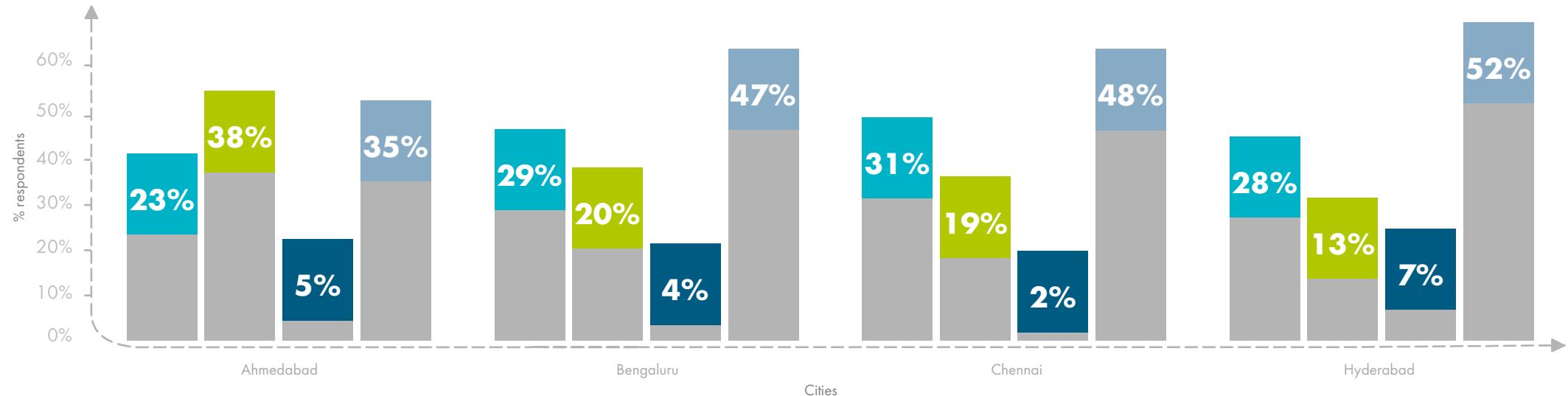
◆ It has a significant impact on organizational performance, but does not impact growth

◆ It has a less than significant impact on organizational performance

◆ It has a negligible impact on organizational performance

Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

## IMPACT OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE - CITIES



◆ It could seriously affect organizational performance and even growth

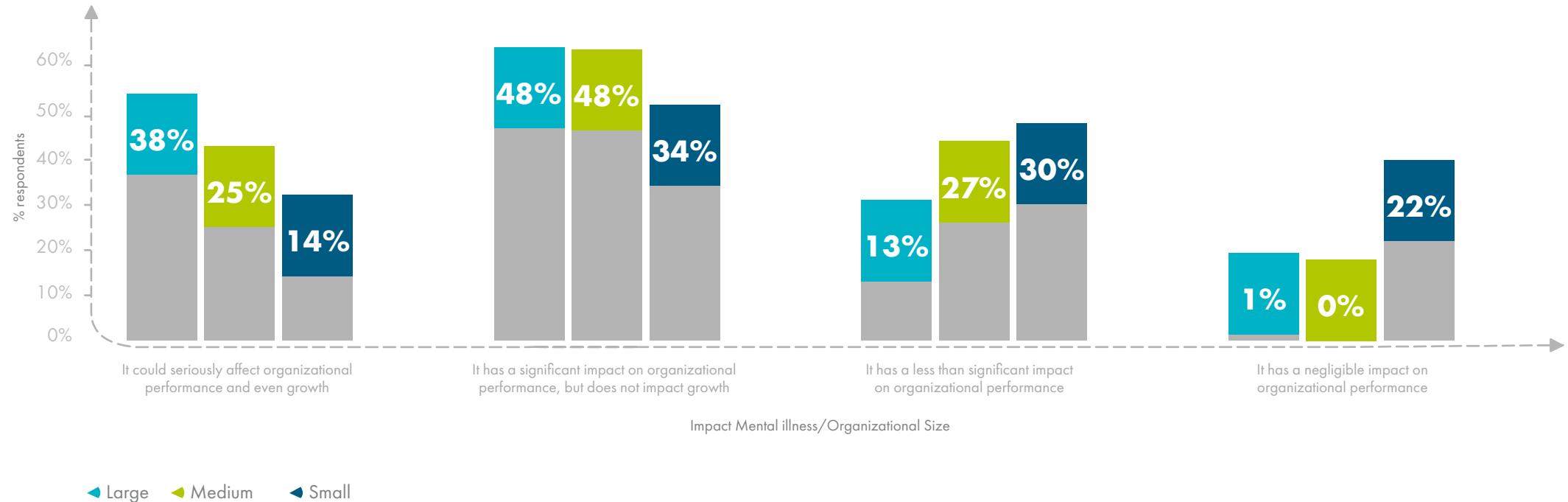
◆ It has a less than significant impact on organizational performance

◆ It has a negligible impact on organizational performance

◆ It has a significant impact on organizational performance, but does not impact growth

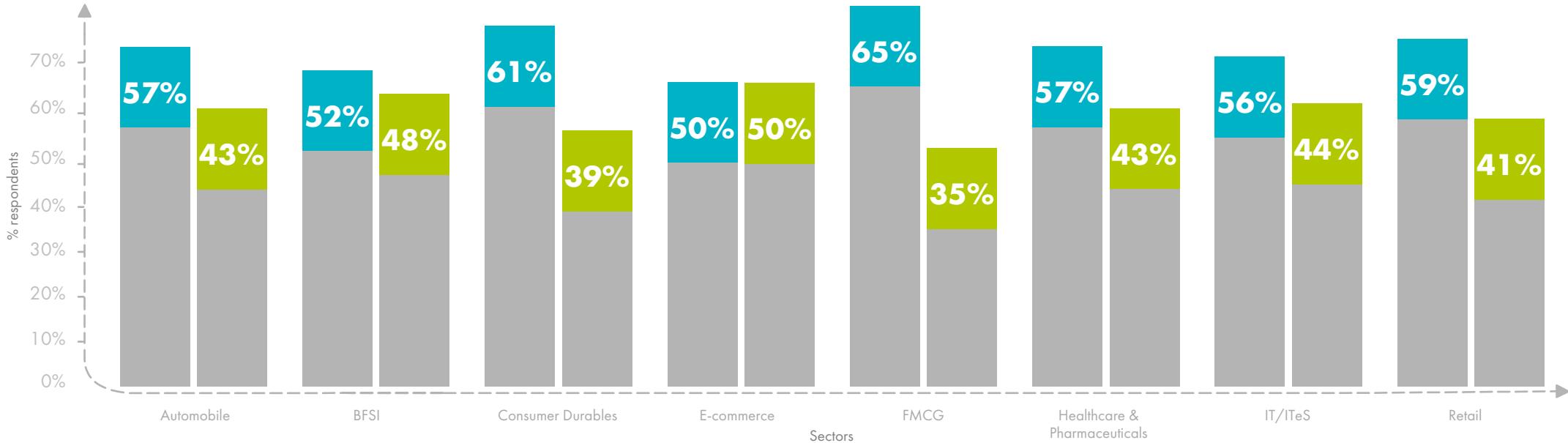
Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

## IMPACT OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE - ORGANIZATIONAL SIZE

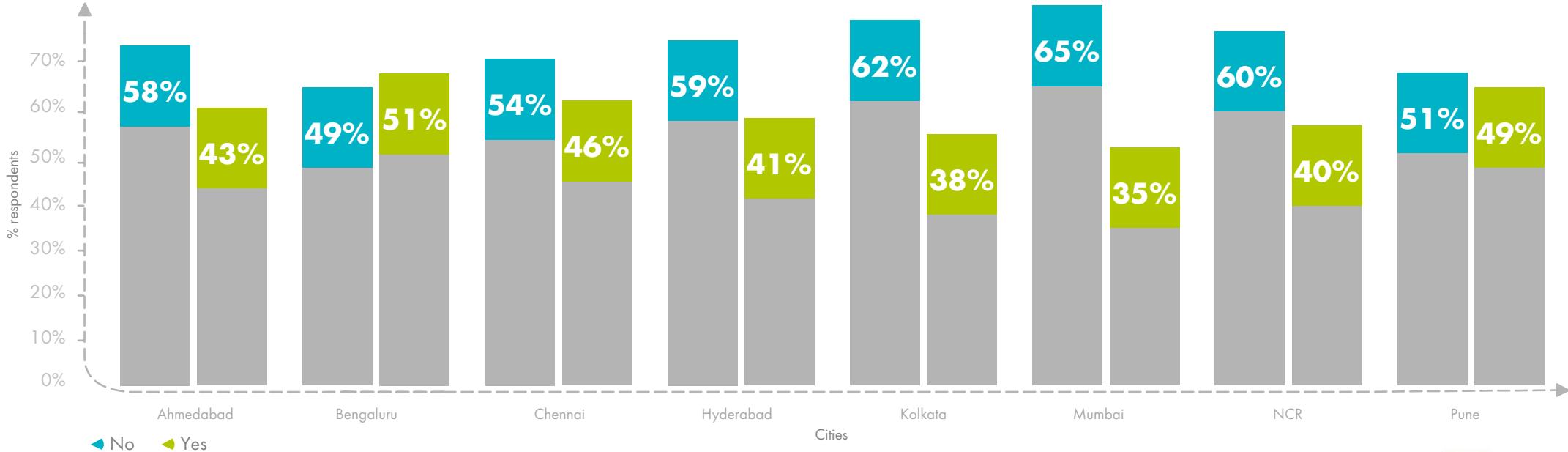


Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
 Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

## PRIVACY-ASSURED MECHANISMS FOR MENTAL HEALTH, EMPLOYERS - SECTORS



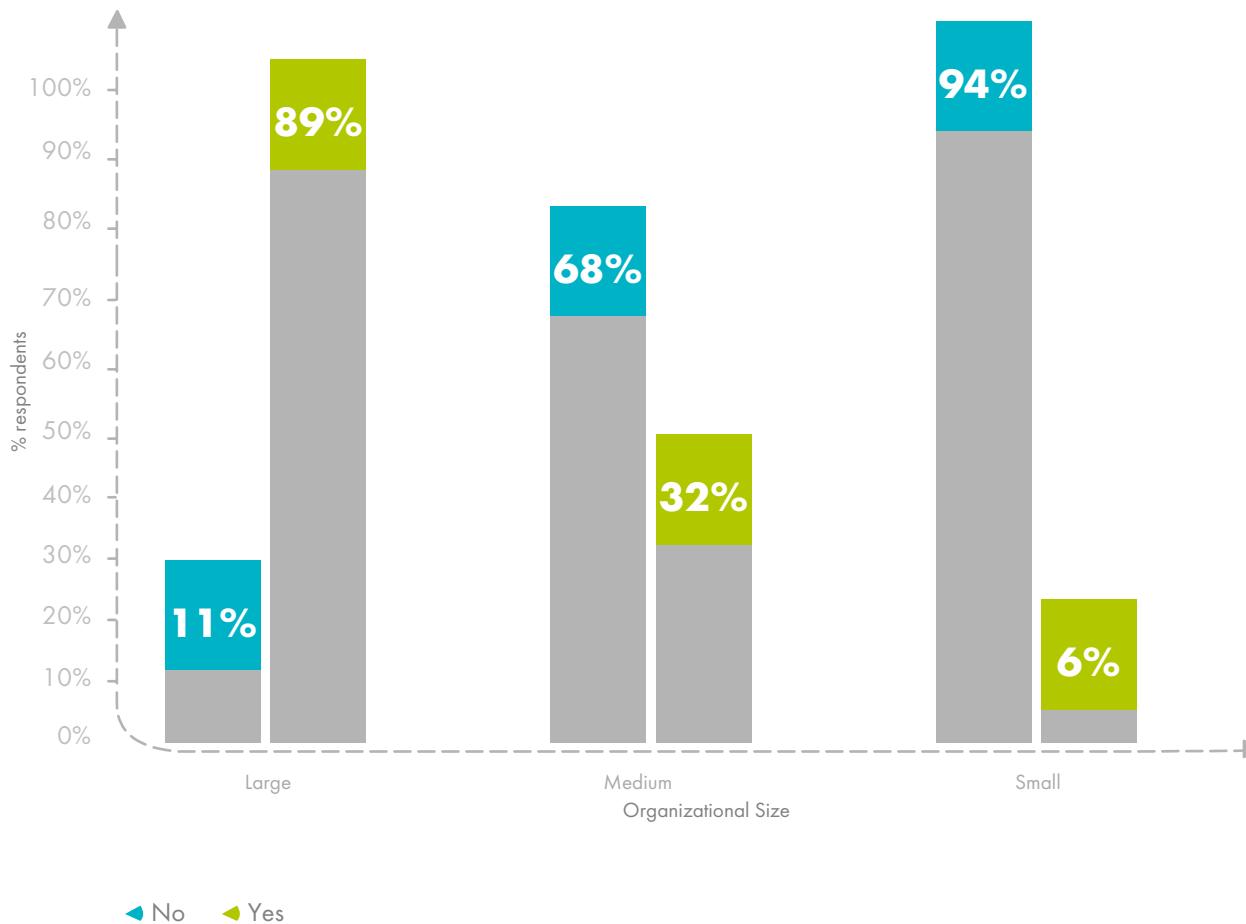
## PRIVACY-ASSURED MECHANISMS FOR MENTAL HEALTH, EMPLOYERS - CITIES



Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India

Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

## PRIVACY-ASSURED MECHANISMS FOR MENTAL HEALTH, EMPLOYERS - BY ORGANIZATIONAL SIZE



Respondent sample: 368 Mid and Senior level HR Manager and 1088 employee respondents across India  
 Note: Employer and employee samples were drawn from different organizations.

## Annexure-3:

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# RESEARCH, ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY, BIBLIOGRAPHY



## Research methodology: Exploratory survey design

Secondary research:

- ▶ Literature review

Exploration covers:

- ▶ Major Indian research resources about mental health and mental health issue trends in India

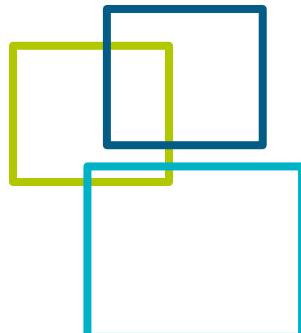
Expert interviews

Sample size:

- ▶ Experts: panel of 3 mental wellness experts

Questionnaire covering:

- ▶ Background and experience in the field of mental health
- ▶ Definition of mental illness
- ▶ Kind of clients and types of mental health issues.
- ▶ The most common mental health issues at workplaces
- ▶ To what extent HR personnel are aware of the importance of mental health issues - if low, what are the barriers to this awareness
- ▶ What are the mental health concerns corporate clients present
- ▶ Kind of mental health support (employee) clients seek from their organizations Modern Trends
- ▶ Impact of COVID on mental health therapists and clients
- ▶ Evolving trends of mental health care management in India
- ▶ Barriers to the implementation of mental healthcare programs
- ▶ Role Corporate India can play in addressing mental health issues



## Research methodology: Quantitative research

### Primary survey methodology

Sample size: 368 Employer respondents

► Mid and Senior level HR Manager

#### Questionnaire covering:

- Degree of awareness of mental wellness and associated issues
- The magnitude of the problem across Corporate India
- Workplaces being instrumental in the cause and/or aggravation of mental illness among affected people
- Ranking employee wellness issues based on their order of importance to the organization
- Factors causing or further mental illness in working professionals
- Mental health as part of corporate / employee wellness programs
- Policies and mechanisms which are receptive to mental wellness cases in the organization and address them in time
- Mental illness impact organizational performance
- Measures implemented to address mental wellness concerns
- Most common mental health issues
- Privacy-assured mechanisms to approach/consult experts
- Engagement of Health experts such as a Counsellor, a Clinical Psychologist, or an Industrial / Organisational Psychologist
- Prevention of mental illness
- Addressing concerns, aggravated mental health issues due to COVID-19
- Challenges/roadblocks preventing HR managers from supporting mental wellness concerns
- Priority the organization accords to mental health

### Primary survey methodology

Sample size: 1088 Employee respondents

► Age - across 4 various levels  
Gender - Male/Female categories

#### Questionnaire covering:

- How serious a matter mental and emotional health is
- Experience of mental health issues - by employee or anybody they know
- Awareness of the detrimental impact caused to one's health due to mental health issues
- Rating one's mental / emotional wellbeing
- The general reasons causing mental illness
- The reasons for mental illness caused by work
- Aspects one thinks were impacted due to COVID-19 lockdown.
- Reaching out for help if in case one feels his/her mental health is in bad shape
- Organization employing any Counsellor, Clinical Psychologist or an Industrial Psychologist for employee care and wellness
- How are mental health issues presently addressed in the employee's company
- Good aspects of the organization's mental health initiatives
- Is existing set up in the organization effective in combating mental health issues?
- What other initiatives should the organization undertake or what facilities should they provide?

## Methodology: Categorization by Awareness & Actionability

Categorization carried out by allocating weights for the response options of each question based on their importance to the context, and summarization

### Data Analysis

- Data Analysed using statistical methods and techniques. The Major tools used are MS Excel and Python.

### Respondents scored and categorised as

- High awareness-High actionability
- High awareness-Low actionability
- Low awareness-High actionability
- Low awareness-Low actionability

Degree of awareness of mental wellness and associated issues	
Level of Awareness	Weights
We seriously lack awareness .....	Low
We are aware, but not to the required extent .....	Low
We are well aware .....	Medium
We are very sensitive to mental wellness concerns .....	High

Mental health as part of corporate / employee wellness program	
Participation in Employee Wellness Program	Weights
Yes .....	1
No .....	0

### Measures implemented to address mental wellness concerns

#### Addressing the concerns

	Weights
Occasional workshops / counselling sessions / therapies by mental health experts .....	0.1
Employee Assistance Program / similar other programs (own/third party) .....	0.3
Communication initiatives to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health .....	0.1
Monitor exceptions .....	0.1
Promote healthy work .....	0.1
Physical and Mental Fitness initiatives .....	0.1
Anonymous surveys and anonymity in addressing an affected individual .....	0.1
Provision for sabbaticals (in deserving cases) .....	0.1
Others (Specify) .....	

## Research methodology: Survey design

Total 368 Employer Respondents

Sectors	Total. No. of Respondents
Automobile	47
BFSI	46
Consumer Durables	44
E-commerce	46
FMCG	47
Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals	47
IT/ITeS	45
Retail	46

Total. No. of Respondents

Business Size	Total. No. of Respondents
Large (greater than 1000 employees)	122
Medium (100 to 1000 employees)	129
Small (less than 100 employees)	118

Total. No. of Respondents

City	Total. No. of Respondents
Ahmedabad	40
Bangalore	48
Chennai	48
Hyderabad	47
Kolkata	44
Mumbai	48
NCR	48
Pune	45

Total 1088 Employee Respondents

Sectors	Total. No. of Respondents
Automobile	136
BFSI	136
Consumer Durables	136
E-commerce	136
FMCG	136
Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals	136
IT/ITeS	136
Retail	136

Total. No. of Respondents

Business Size	Total. No. of Respondents
Large (greater than 1000 employees)	359
Medium (100 to 1000 employees)	373
Small (less than 100 employees)	356

Total. No. of Respondents

City	Total. No. of Respondents
Ahmedabad	136
Bangalore	136
Chennai	136
Hyderabad	136
Kolkata	136
Mumbai	136
NCR	136
Pune	136

Total 1088 Employee Respondents

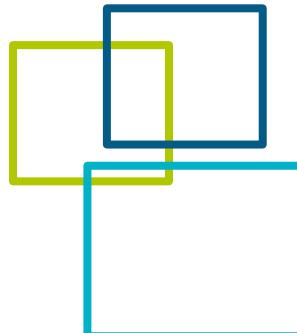
Gender	Total. No. of Respondents
Female	369
Large (greater than 1000 employees)	114
Medium (100 to 1000 employees)	137
Small (less than 100 employees)	118
Male	719
Large (greater than 1000 employees)	245
Medium (100 to 1000 employees)	236
Small (less than 100 employees)	238

Total. No. of Respondents

Age	Total. No. of Respondents
26 - 35 years	294
36 - 45 years	223
46 years or more	214
Less than 25 years	357

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For more info-  
e-mail: marcom.india@gigroup.com

Address-  
World Trade Tower,  
Unit 503, 5th Floor,  
Sector 16, Noida,  
Uttar Pradesh – 201301

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