

# The State of Mental Health in the Workplace During COVID-19

Insights on the state of employees' mental health during COVID-19 and recommendations on how your company can help improve mental health in the workplace



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## In light of the pandemic, it is especially relevant to check on the state of mental health of employees.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), negative working environment can lead to physical and mental health problems, and under stressful conditions, such employees are at higher risk of burnout or breakdown.

However, employees of companies that promote mental health are more likely to increase productivity and thus can benefit from reduce absenteeism and other associated economic gains. Studies show that for every dollar put into scaled up treatment for common mental disorders, there is a return of four dollars (4x the investment) in improved health and productivity.

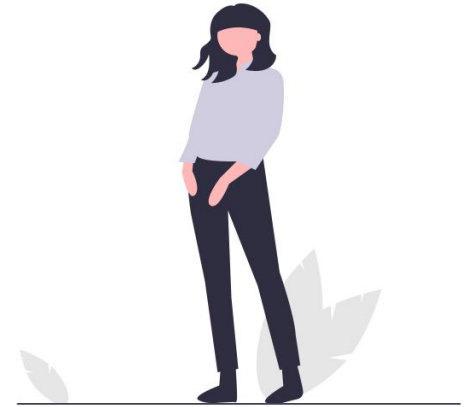
Seeing the vital role that mental health plays in the workplace, Sprout surveyed employees to gain deeper insight on how employees perceive workplace stress.

# Key Findings

**1** 30% of survey respondents from companies that do not provide mental health resources reported much higher levels of stress.

**2** Respondents who are in the officer level are the most affected by job stress.

**3** Majority of respondents (71%) report that their company offers mental health resources.



**4** 12% of respondents report that stress in their jobs affects both their sleep and relationships.

# Survey Background

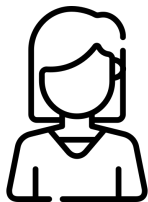
This survey was released through the Sprout HR dashboard. If the users did not wish to participate, they had the option to exit the survey.

The data was collected from May 12, 2020 to 17, 2020, with 2,157 respondents from approximately 175 companies of different sizes in the Philippines.

Once the anonymized responses were collected, the data was analyzed by calculating the average of the responses per company and comparing it to the average of the overall qualified Sprout client database.

# Who did we survey?

## Gender

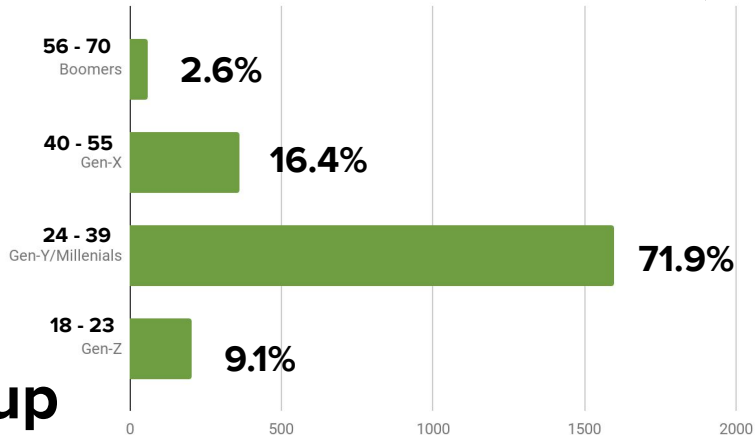


**56.6%**  
female

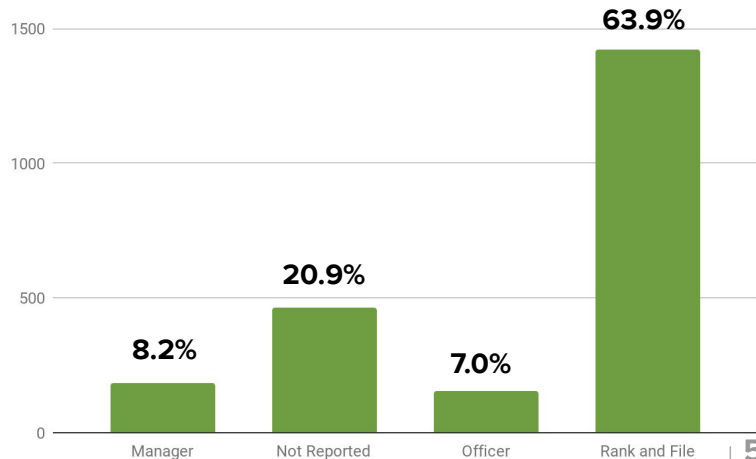


**43.4%**  
male

## Age Group

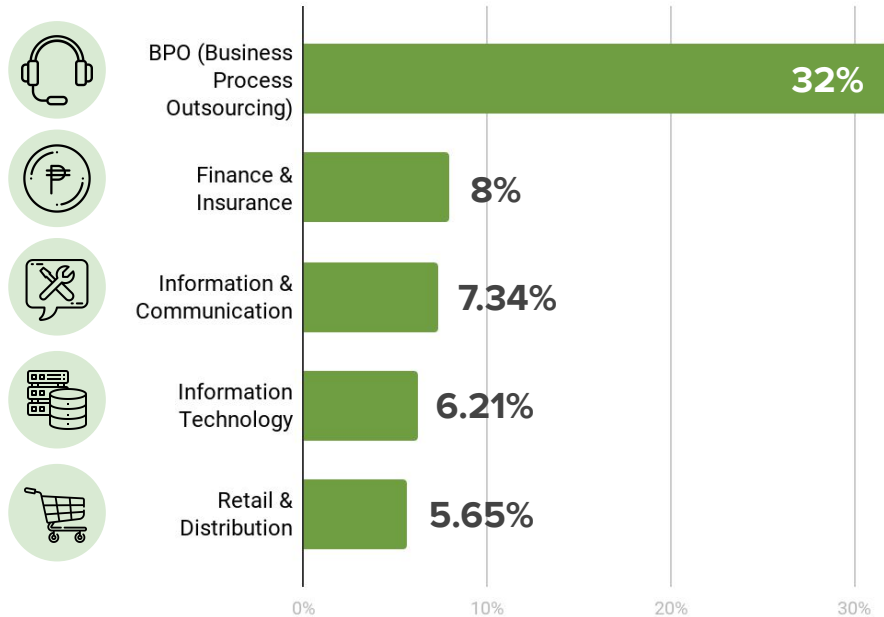


## Job Level



# What industries did we survey?

These are the industries that participated in this survey.



## OTHER INDUSTRIES:

Food & Beverage (5.08%)  
Consumer/Commercial/Professional Services (4.52%)  
Healthcare (4.52%)  
Construction and Engineering (3.95%)  
Manufacturing (3.95%)  
Real Estate (3.39%)  
Media and Entertainment (2.26%)  
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (1.69%)  
Transportation & Storage (1.69%)  
Transportation and Logistics (1.69%)  
Hospitality & Leisure (1.69%)  
Education (1.13%)  
Retail, Wholesale, and Distribution (1.13%)  
Public Service and Social Work (1.13%)  
General Services (1.13%)  
Energy & Utilities (1.13%)

# The state of mental health policy in the Filipino workplace

## 71%

of respondents report that their workplace offers mental health resources; while

## 29%

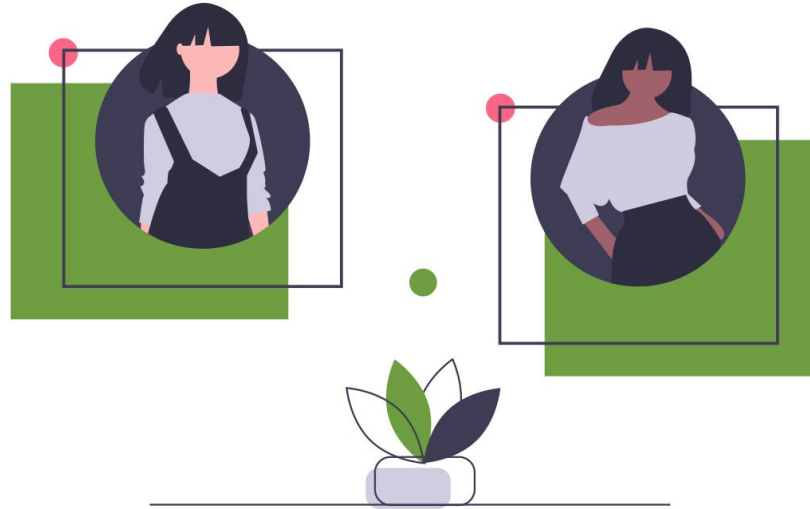
of respondents report that their workplace don't offer mental health resources.

### The Mental Health Law mandates employers to:

- develop appropriate policies and programs on mental health in the workplace designed to raise awareness on mental health issues
- correct stigma and discrimination associated with mental health condition
- identify and provide support for individuals at risk
- Facilitate access of individuals with mental health conditions to treatment and psychosocial support

Is your company compliant?  
Message us at [mybenefits@sprout.ph](mailto:mybenefits@sprout.ph) to know.





# Employees' Level of Stress during COVID-19

# Survey respondents report being **moderately stressed** in the last month.

In order to measure the overall stress levels of our survey respondents due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our team used the Perceived Stress Scale test.

The **Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)** test, originally developed in 1983, is the most widely used psychological instrument for assessing and measuring an individual's perception of stress.

Total scores of the respondents in the PSS test in this survey are interpreted this way:

- **0-41,377:** Low Stress
- **41,378-82,754:** Moderate Stress
- **82,755-124,132:** High Perceived Stress

**In this survey, the cumulative PSS scores of the respondents is 51,691 which means they are experiencing moderate level of stress in the last month.**

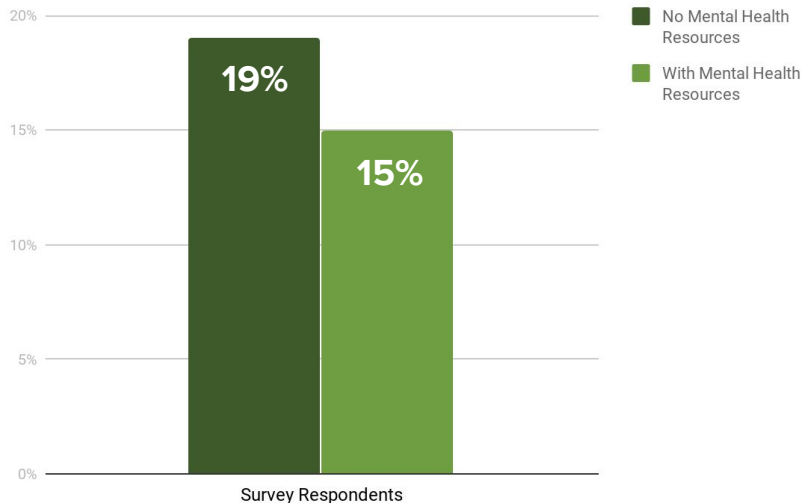
## Staying on top of things

Staying on top of things means being able to adapt to changes easily, or being on schedule with our tasks. This requires a great deal of focus and distractions are an enemy.

When employees constantly operate in crisis mode and are constantly distracted, it adds up to their stress. And when employees are constantly stressed, it brings down employee performance, according to a research by [Altangerel, O., et al, 2015](#). While 16% of our survey respondents report feeling they were not on top of things, it's a sizeable number that might be affecting your company as well.

# 16%

of respondents felt that they were not on top of things in the last month.



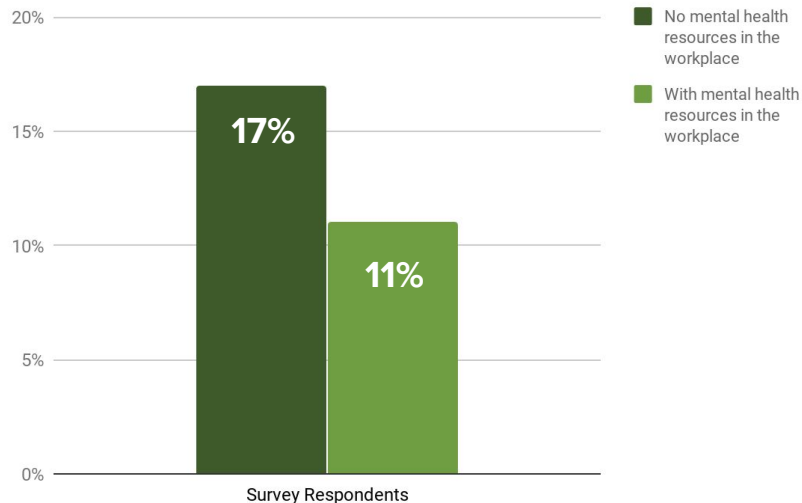
# Resilience

The uncertainty brought upon by the Covid-19 crisis has had an impact on how we work. Fear and anxiety levels are higher than usual. Learning to cope in these times will have an impact on well being and productivity. It is important that we recognize how employees are experiencing stress so the appropriate steps can be taken.

- Connect with others and communicate with colleagues
- Identify the things that you cannot control to those things that are within your control
- Develop sense of control by committing to a daily routine that would positively affect your well-being.

# 13%

of respondents felt that things were not going their way in the last month.



## Feeling upset

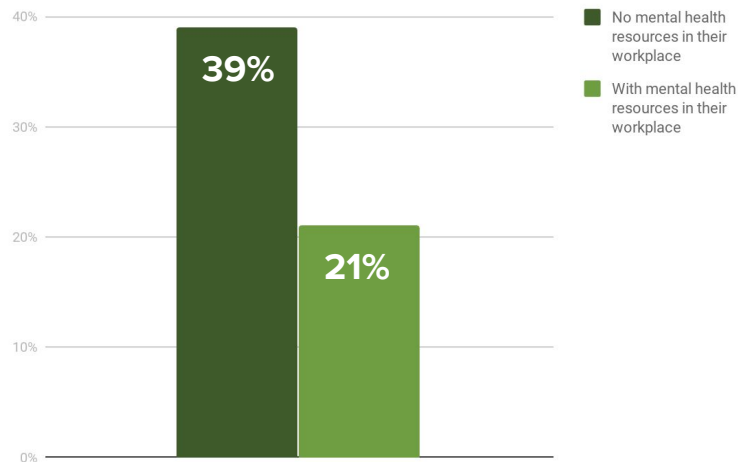
A stressful event can take a toll on everyone's mental health. It affects the way we **think**, **act** and how we **respond** to our daily activities. On March 16, 2020, the Philippines under President Rodrigo Duterte imposed an enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) across the country. This is effectively **a total lockdown, restricting the movement** of the population except for necessity, work, and health circumstances, in response to the growing pandemic of COVID-19 in the country. In addition, local non-essential shops and businesses were **forced to temporary closure** due to the community quarantine.

**Feeling upset** because of unexpected bad situations and events is part of human condition, it is normal! However, **the key to assessing whether these feelings require serious attention is evaluating:**

- How often are you feeling the sense of distress
- how bad it gets; and
- how long it lasts

# 27%

of respondents have often been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly in the last month.



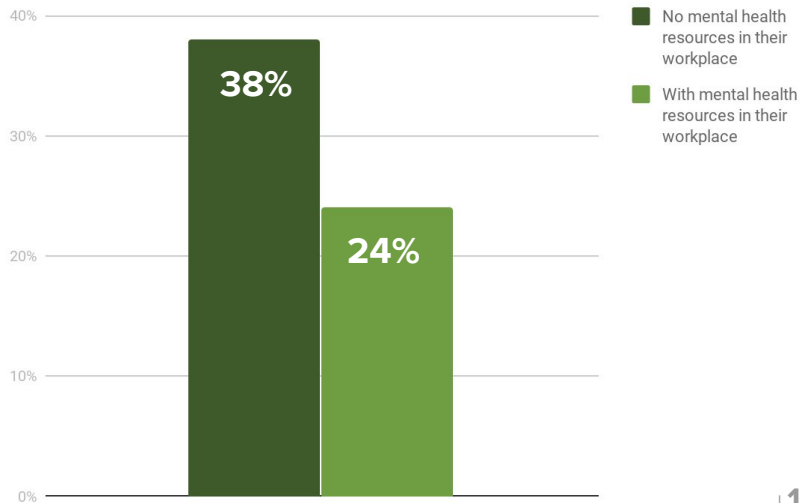
# Coping with what you can't control

Self-control and the need to control everyday situations are actually related. Self-control is the ability to control oneself, in particular one's emotions and desires or the expression of them in one's behavior, especially in difficult situations. This dominant response refers to the need of a person to exert control on things that occur in their day-to-day life. The reason for enabling a dominant response is in order to produce a sense of self-gratification.

Knowing this, it is important for many to focus their current energy on a productive outlet that produces results, such as doing chores, building a DIY project, or learning a new recipe. Consequently, it builds the self-control aspect of a person which sheds a positive light on things they can control versus a situation in society that is out of their hands.

## 28%

of respondents report that they have often felt that they were unable to control the important things in their life in the last month.



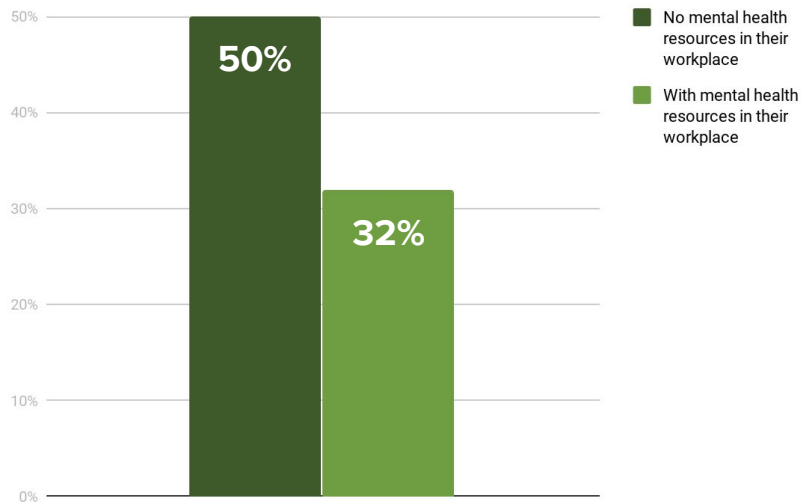
# Feelings of anxiety

Experiencing stress and anxiety is a normal part of life. It pushes us to accomplish great feats or meet deadlines at work for example. However, they can also negatively impact our life when our feelings are not kept in check.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, we are experiencing more anxiety than usual, given that it affects important aspects of life such as health, job security and presents us with more uncertainty each day. Now more than ever, we should find ways to cope with our overwhelming feelings, worries and fears.

## 38%

of respondents report that they have often felt nervous and stressed in the last month.



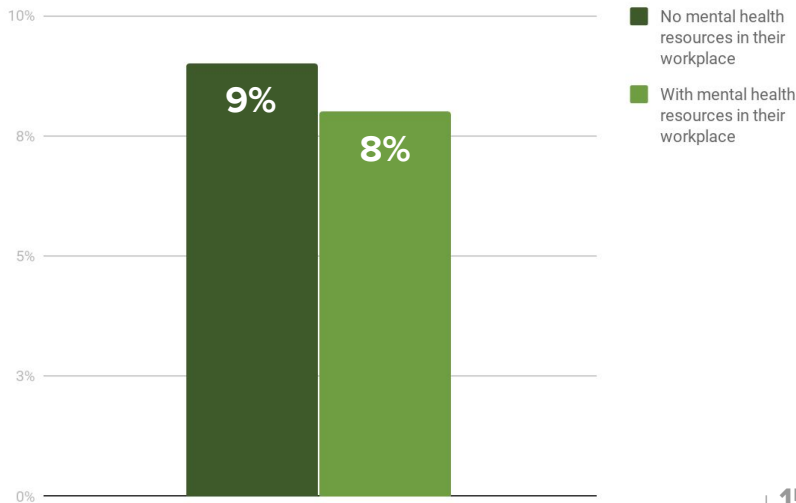
# Confidence in ability to handle problems

## 8%

Remote work has been widely implemented in the Philippines in the past few months to sustain the business and different industries. We are now constantly connected and the work from home culture are highly demanding than ever.

Problem-solving is innate in human nature as we know that problems are inevitable. One of the best practices are taking responsibility and learning to handle personal and work problems by dealing it in a constructive way. Eventually, these positive actions would build the confidence to address challenges effectively and leads to positive results.

of respondents report that they felt they were often not confident about their ability to handle their personal problems in the last month.





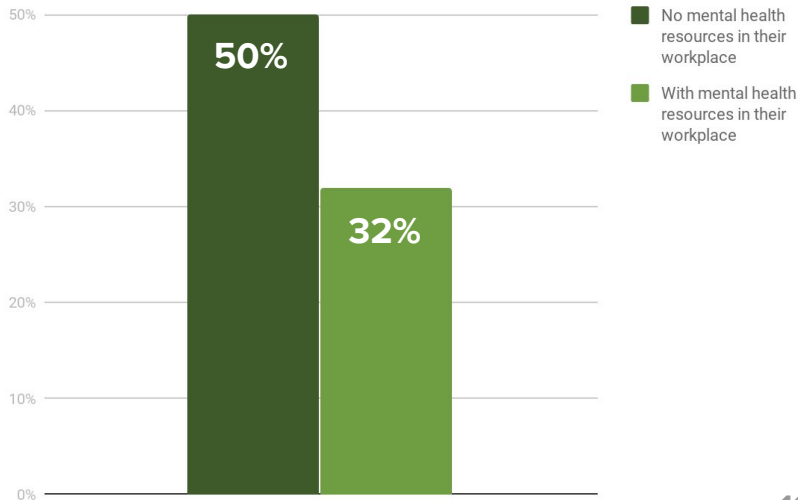
# Productivity decline

In our previous Sprout Pulse report, we found out that 36% of the respondents report that unstable internet connection is a roadblock to successfully working from home. In spite of the fact that external factors like tools and environment plays a huge role in productivity, mental health problems can also affect the way people work. The mood and the behavior of the person will ultimately determine whether a person will be able to cope up with the day to day tasks and projects.

By bringing your whole self to work, it may be easier to focus on what matters most, and in return respecting your personal time and giving yourself a pat on the back will help you let go of other unfinished tasks and to ready yourself for the following day.

## 20%

of respondents report that they could not cope with all the things that they had to do in the last month.

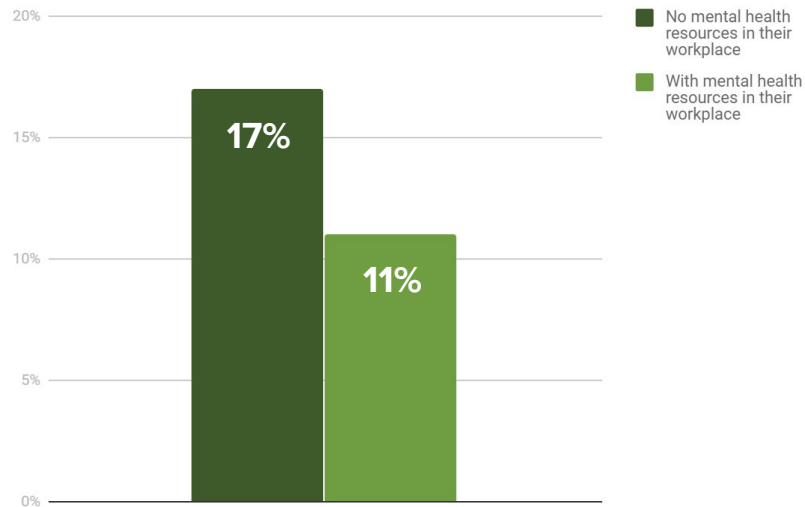


## Managing Irritability

Irritability is a feeling of agitation. It affects people of all ages, and some causes specifically for adults are: stress, anxiety, depression, sleep deprivation and other medical factors. Given that a big change has recently occurred in society due to the pandemic and work situations, the feelings of stress and anxiety have become inevitable to many. To address this, it is important to figure out the source of your irritability and create a healthier lifestyle which include: having a proper diet, exercising, having a consistent sleep pattern, and looking for other stress management practices.

# 14%

of respondents report that they have often felt that they have not been able to control irritations in their life in the last month.



# Angered because of things outside of their control

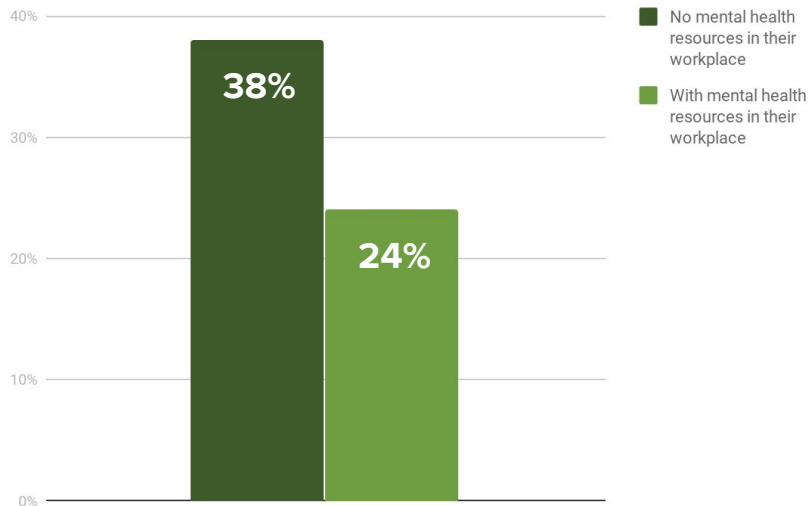
## 24%

of respondents report that they have been angered because of things that were outside of their control in the last month.

As COVID-19 triggers unprecedented changes to how we live, work and interact with others, we realize that there are more things that we don't have control over. This can cause frustration, impatience and ultimately anger at the pile up of unpredictable events in our lives.

When we find ourselves in this position, it's best to step back and consider the following:

1. What are the factors that I can control?
2. Who can I share my opinion with that can give support or helpful feedback?
3. What is the worst case scenario?
4. How can I best move forward?



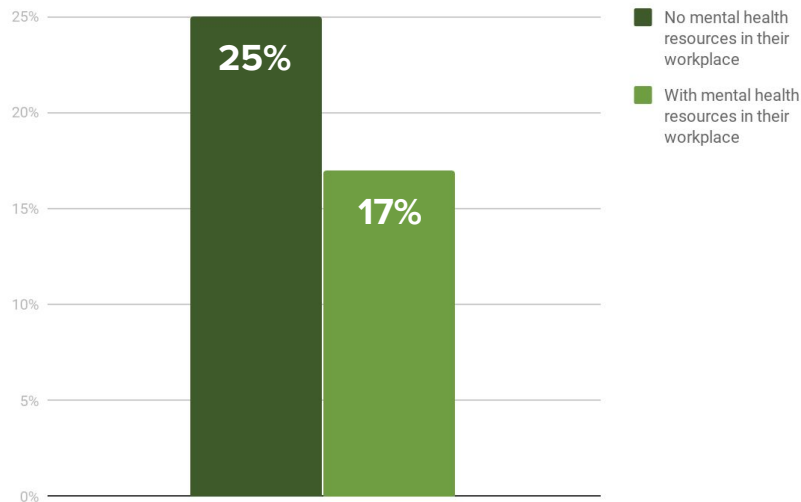
# Overcoming difficulties

With the current work situation, blurring boundaries between work and personal life can lead to difficulties in adapting to the work from home setup. Despite that, being aware that unexpected challenges may arise is a part of the human experience. The following steps can help overcome these challenges:

1. Reframing the situation to get new perspectives.
2. Take responsibility of the issue.
3. Brainstorm possible solutions.
4. Take action.

## 18%

of respondents report that they often have felt difficulties were piling up so high that they could not overcome them in the last month.





# Job Stress and Its Effects on Filipino Workers

# Protecting Relationships from Work Stress

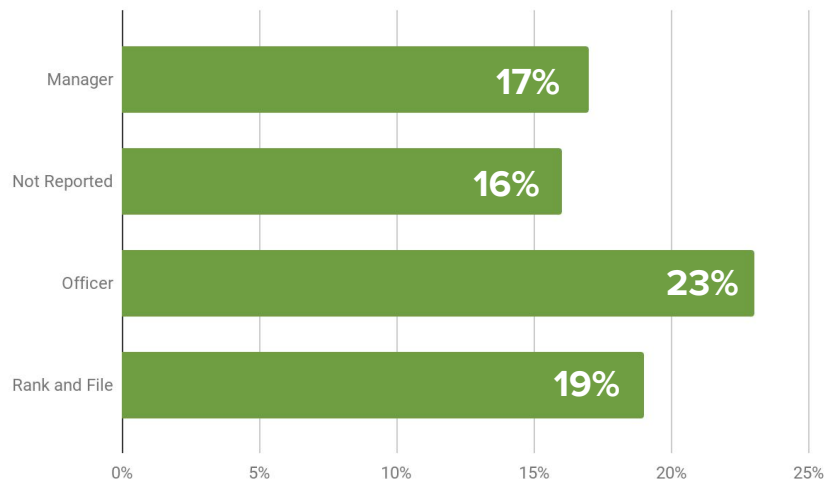
Research suggests that detachment, or disengaging psychologically from work when we leave is important in promoting recovery from stress and preventing feelings of agitation, or emotional strain. When this does not happen, it results to the feeling of fatigue, having less energy, and withdrawing from loved ones. Not being able to “shut-down” from work is very unhealthy and may bring about other problems.

In order to avoid this, here are some actions that can be done in order to detach from work and protect everyone’s well-being:

1. Meditation - having a few minutes of silence to reflect and let go of everything that occurred during the work day
2. Socializing with friends and loved ones virtually
3. Exercising to release endorphins which help in letting go of tense and negative energy
4. Having a separate area that is meant solely for work

## 19%

of respondents report that stress from their job affects their relationships with their friends or family.



# Correlation between Work Stress & Sleep

There are many ways that work can affect one's quality of sleep. Decreased sleep quality can be caused by changing work schedules, extra long hours that delay sleep or work stress and rumination at night on pending tasks.

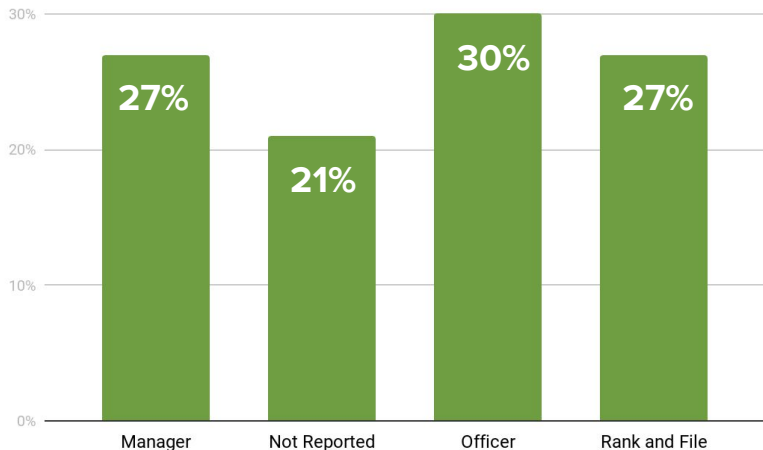
To prevent our jobs from affecting our sleep, we must take steps to separate work from our personal time. Here are some practices to promote work-life balance and better sleep:

1. Exercise and spend the extra energy you have on this.
2. Avoid bringing work to bed.
3. Practice mindfulness through meditation or yoga.
4. Finish all your tasks for the day or write a list of pending ones before sleeping.

## 26%

of respondents report that their workplace issues negatively affect

Breakdown per job level



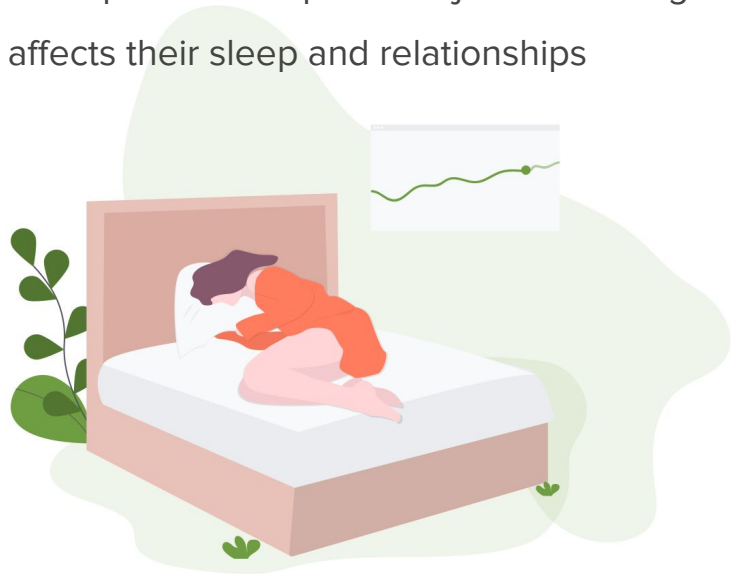
## Coping with stress

Stress from work occurs normally to many employees from different industries. However, when an employee encounters constant exposure to high-levels of stress it can affect physical health.

When a person is constantly put into a fight or flight situation in work everyday, this causes burnout and research links this with symptoms of anxiety and depression. Symptoms of these mental issues include sleep deprivation and can affect personal relationships.

# 12%

of respondents report that job stress negatively affects their sleep and relationships





# Promoting mental health in the workplace benefits not only your employees but your company as well.

Here's how you can promote mental health in your workplace:

1

Conduct regular surveys and mental health assessments with your employees.

2

Have a mental health professional readily available to show your employees you care.

3

Introduce group guided meditations and invest in a teacher to guide you through a meditation practice.

**4**

**An important aspect of mental health is exercise. Invest in a yoga and fitness instructor for you and your company.**

**5**

**Offer resources such as regular mental health tips that are readily available.**

**6**

**Draft an effective mental health policy that covers all of your company's policies, programs, and rules on promoting mental health awareness in your company.**

# Your employees' mental health is of prime importance.

Sprout can help you craft an effective mental health policy as well as implement programs that are compliant with DOLE's mental health requirement.

To inquire about our mental health services, contact us at **[mybenefits@sprout.ph](mailto:mybenefits@sprout.ph)**





## ABOUT SPROUT

Sprout Solutions is a software company aimed at creating paradigm-changing solutions for the Philippines.

**Our goal is to help companies in the Philippines grow through our solutions that address a variety of challenges in human resource management: time keeping, 201, payroll, advanced analytics for workforce management, and employee benefits.**

Over 422 companies have started their digital transformation by automating their HR and Payroll pain points.

With Sprout, allow your HR teams to focus on what they love doing best: Engaging your employees to be their best.