

# Resilient Workplaces

Creating supportive workplaces by integrating employee mental health strategies that establish healthier workplaces and enhance employee wellbeing.



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF  
**LABOR & ECONOMIC  
OPPORTUNITY**

## FLIGHT

**If you're confronted by a bear, you may run, walk backwards slowly or otherwise flee to get away from the threat.**

In the workplace, this may be disengaging, missing deadlines, avoiding interactions, taking sick days, quitting or other methods to flee from the stressful situation.

## FIGHT

**In the bear scenario, the response can include standing one's ground, yelling, looking bigger or otherwise engaging the bear to leave.**

In the workplace, this generally presents as anger or aggressive behaviors, quick to temper or lashing out in other ways.

## FREEZE

**In the bear scenario, this means not moving and freezing in place.**

In the workplace this looks the same. The person is simply unable to move forward, engage, process new information, tackle the challenge or respond in a meaningful way.

## FAWN

**Consistently abandoning your own needs to serve others to avoid conflict, criticism, or disapproval.**

Fawning is also called the "please and appease" response and is associated with people-pleasing and codependency. This is also known as the "submit," or "submission," response.

## THE IMPACT OF TOXIC AND CHRONIC STRESS

**Among the symptoms of chronic stress, individuals may experience cognitive, emotional, physical and behavioral signs of chronic stress:**

- Aches and pains
- Insomnia or sleepiness
- Change in social behavior, *such as staying in often*
- Low energy
- Unfocused or cloudy thinking
- Change in appetite
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Change in emotional responses to others
- Emotional withdrawal

**Chronic stress is linked to other conditions, both psychological and physical. These can include:**

- Diseases such as hypertension, heart disease, obesity and metabolic syndrome, Type II diabetes and arthritis.
- Addiction to alcohol, nicotine and/or prescription drugs, and behavioral-related activities such as addiction to the internet, food or gambling.
- Mood disorders and anxiety disorders, which are common secondary diagnoses for people with chronic stress.
- **Hypertension, depression, addiction and anxiety disorders.**

# Identifying the Problem

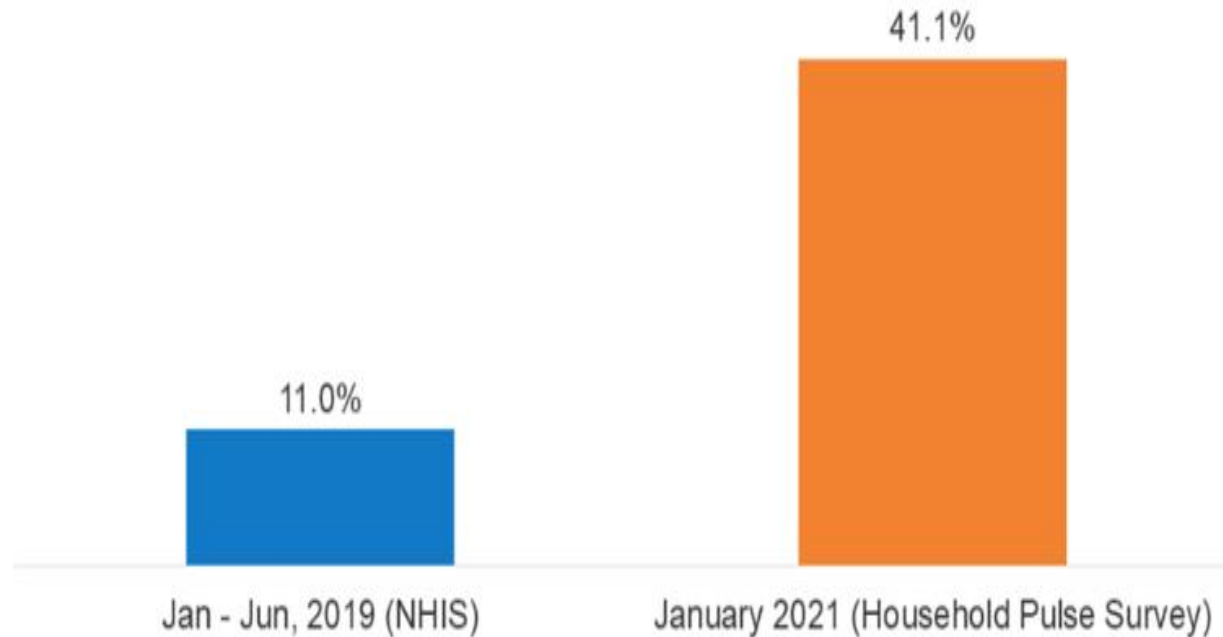
- Depression and anxiety are two of the most prevalent mental health challenges impacting our country's workplaces every day and have thus been studied the most.
- A survey of working people from the CEO Roundtable of the American Heart Association found that while:
  - 76% of employees had struggled with at least one issue affecting their mental health,
  - Only 42% have been diagnosed,
  - Of these, only 37% revealed this diagnosis to their employer.

**In 2020, roughly 48M people suffered from an anxiety disorder, while 21M suffered from a major depressive episode.**

**However, less than half, 46.2%, received treatment for a mental illness in 2020.**

**Overall, 21% of the U.S. adult population will have a mental illness in any given year.**

## Average Share of Adults Reporting Symptoms of Anxiety Disorder and/or Depressive Disorder, January-June 2019 vs. January 2021



NOTES: Percentages are based on responses to the GAD-2 and PHQ-2 scales. Pulse findings (shown here for January 6 – 18, 2021) have been stable overall since data collection began in April 2020.

### The Impact of the Pandemic

With the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans experienced toxic and chronic stress, and many have experienced significant trauma.

This has increased symptoms of anxiety and depression in a large way.

## WORKPLACE STRESS AND IMPACTS ARE PREVALENT

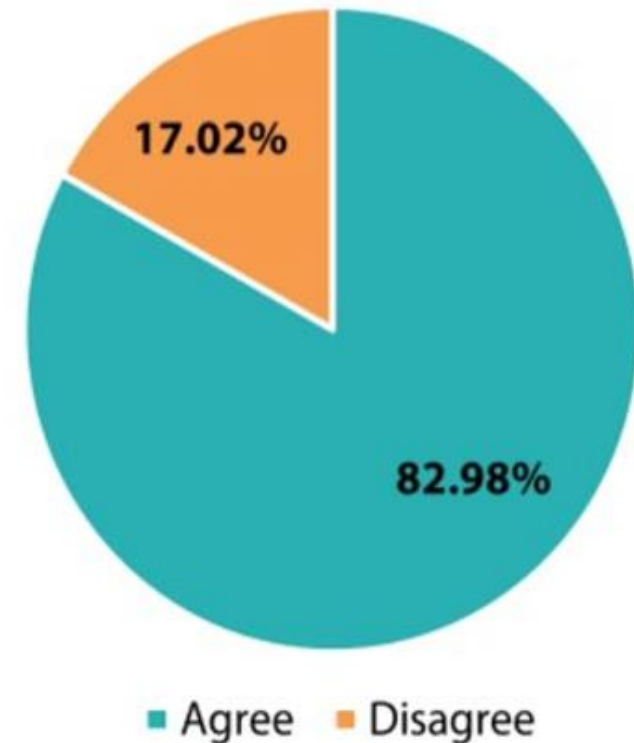
### *2021 MHA Workplace Survey*

- Exhaustion, including emotional exhaustion, is one of the earliest signs of burnout.
- Employees who are feeling emotionally drained from work are at a higher risk of workplace stress, leading to burnout and other mental health concerns.

Among the many types of work stress that can have more negative impacts on people, some of the more common include:

- Overwork
- Job quality
- Job insecurity
- Bullying or harassment
- Lack of perceived supports
- Unrealistic expectations
- Workplace violence

## I FEEL EMOTIONALLY DRAINED FROM MY WORK



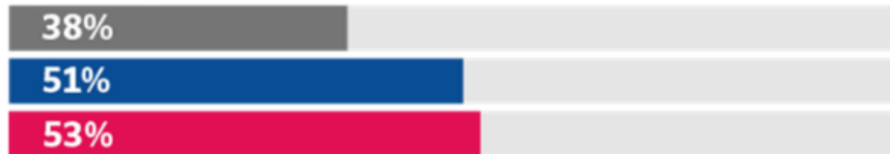
# THIS STRESS IS PERVASIVE ACROSS ALL INDUSTRIES

Especially those interacting with customers/clients

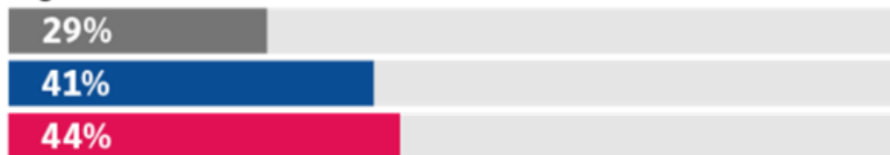
## FREQUENCY OF FEELINGS AT WORK IN THE PAST MONTH

% ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS/VERY/QUITE FREQUENTLY

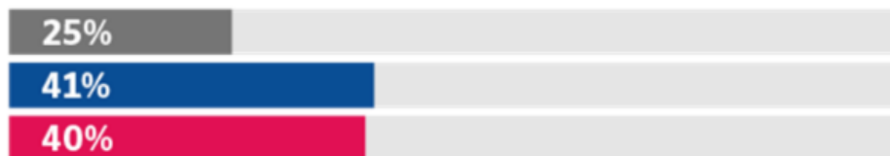
### Physical fatigue



### Cognitive weariness



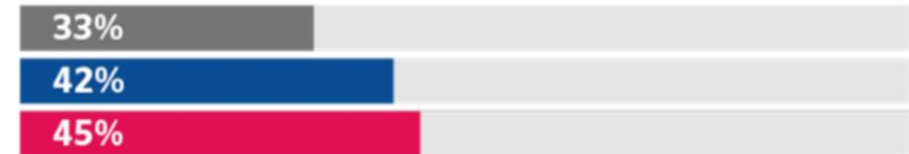
### Emotional exhaustion



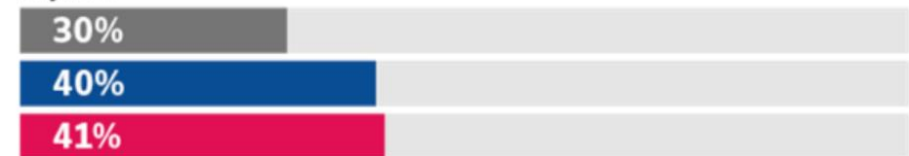
## IN THE PAST MONTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND PHYSICAL PROBLEMS KEPT ME FROM ACHIEVING MY GOALS AT WORK

% STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE

### Mental Health



### Physical



## MY EMPLOYER PROVIDES ITS EMPLOYEES WITH ADEQUATE HEALTH INSURANCE

% STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE



# Building the Business Case



## *Why the Workplace?*

- Working people spend most of their waking hours at work.
- **65% of Employees** surveyed identified their job as the number 1 stress in their lives.
- Workplaces are already bearing the brunt of these costs of toxic and chronic stress, trauma, and unsafe mental health challenges.
- Workplaces are most likely the best place to offer education, support and the ability to impact good outcomes.



## IGNORING IS EXPENSIVE

- The Chicago Resiliency Network found a **\$4 return for each dollar invested** in mental health treatment. Similar numbers are found in other research on mental health, which can vary a bit by condition. However, overall, the return on investment appears significant.
- Typically, Invisible Costs:
  - **Absenteeism**-major depressive disorder and anxiety alone account for **27 or more lost workdays** annually per person experiencing these conditions, and cost roughly **\$250B annually**.
  - **Presenteeism** occurs when workers are in the workplace, but due to depression are unable to fully function. A study from Tufts University found that **depression accounted for 37% of all presenteeism losses** for the top 10 most expensive chronic conditions at **roughly \$109 per all employees with or without the condition**.
  - Based on prevalence data of depressive conditions, it is likely that an employer with 10,000 employees has 1,000 that are experiencing depression. These same multiples apply to smaller employers as well, meaning that the costs associated are already occurring.
  - Adding in job stress, research suggests that **stress alone** costs American companies over **\$300B** in health care costs, absenteeism and poor performance. Further, **roughly 40% of turnover is due to job stress**.

## THE GOOD NEWS

Employees who strongly agree that their employer cares about their overall wellbeing, including mental health, are:

**71%**

less likely to report experiencing a lot of burnout

**5x**

more likely to advocate for their employer as a place to work

**69%**

less likely to search for a new job

**3x**

more likely to be engaged at work

**36%**

more likely to be thriving in their lives

**Employers who invest in their employees' mental health and safety see a significant return on investment including improved employee satisfaction, increased productivity and reduced absenteeism and turnover.**

# Five Steps to Start Building a Resilient Workplace

01

**Assess Your  
Workplace and  
Culture**

02

**Consider  
Workplace  
Policies,  
Practices and  
Procedures**

03

**Recommit to  
Employee  
Assistance  
Programs  
(EAPs)**

04

**Develop Ways  
to Engage and  
Empower  
Employees**

05

**Consider  
Adding Mental  
Health to Joint  
Employer/  
Employee  
Safety  
Committees**

# Workplace Mental Health



Opportunities and strategies for employers to create healthy, resilient workplaces and build strong communities.

## Building the Business Case

Why the Workplace?

Working people spend most of their waking hours at work.<sup>15</sup> Workplaces are already bearing the brunt of these costs of toxic and chronic stress, trauma, and unsafe mental health challenges. Workplaces are most likely the best place to offer education, support and the ability to impact good outcomes.



### WHY SO EXPENSIVE

Large industry networks found a significant value invested in mental health programs. These numbers are likely inflated by condition. However, investment in treatment appears to be a key factor in reducing costs. Further, they see some costs of these conditions through medical care, disability, and workplace leave. These program costs are likely more significant because of major depression and anxiety alone. The 2019 survey found workplaces that have programs experiencing these conditions cost roughly \$230 billion. Further, how likely invisible, is the investment and lost productivity.

Presenteism occurs when workers are in the workplace, but due to depression are unable to fully function. A study from Tufts University found that depression accounted for 37% of all presenteeism losses for the top 10 most expensive chronic conditions at roughly \$109 per all employees with or without the condition.<sup>16</sup> Further, in this study, based on prevalence data of depressive conditions, it is likely that an employer with 10,000 employees has 1,000 that are experiencing depression. These same multiples apply to smaller employers as well, meaning that the costs associated are already occurring. Finally, adding in job stress, research suggests that stress alone costs American companies over \$300 billion in health care costs, absenteeism and poor performance. Further, roughly 40% of turnover is due to job stress.<sup>17</sup>

<https://www.heart.org/healthycare/resiliencenetwork/CRN-First-Section>  
<https://table.heart.org/mentalhealth/the-business-case-for-investing-in-mental-health/>  
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Employees' mental health care costs, increased productivity, and turnover.

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