

# THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF YOUNG PROFESSIONALS



# STUDY TEAM

*This report reflects the effort from a broad team affiliated with the Mary Christie Institute, the American Association of Colleges and Universities, the Healthy Minds Network, the National Association of Colleges and Employers, and Morning Consult.*

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# METHODOLOGY

*A survey was administered by Morning Consult between November 1-7, 2022 among a sample of 1,005 adults between the ages of 22-28 with at least a bachelor's degree. The survey was conducted online. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points. In this sample, 42% identified as male and 55% identified as female. Ten percent were Black, 12% were Asian American, 13% were Hispanic, and 74% were white.*

# Introduction & Key Findings

The prevalence of mental health issues among college students is well documented (Auerbach et al, 2018, National College Health Assessment, American College Health Association, 2021), yet less is known about this same population group as they graduate and begin their careers. The Mary Christie Institute, in partnership with the Healthy Minds Network, the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), and the National Association for Colleges and Employers (NACE) conducted a survey of graduates between the ages of 22 and 28 seeking to better understand the mental and emotional health of early career professionals. We believe understanding more about the emotional and mental wellbeing of the “Gen Z” workforce can serve to create a bridge between higher education and industry in this regard and may help to address the mental health problems that are defining this generation.

Young professionals who graduated in the last six years have come of age in an anxious and uncertain time. From the proliferation of social media, to political and cultural divisiveness, to the epic changes brought on by the global pandemic, these young people have seen the norms of human behavior rewritten in real time. Employees in their mid-twenties were in grade school when the smart phone was introduced. Many of them learned that the same technology that brought instant connectivity and learning opportunities could just as easily distract, addict, or alienate.

About half of these young professionals had their college trajectories significantly disrupted by COVID-19, as experiences and milestones (including graduation) transitioned to virtual modalities. Many of them also started their first jobs from home and still may not have met their co-workers in person. The pandemic accelerated the mental distress students were reporting in college and provided a stark reminder of the country’s vast inequity, which left many students more financially and emotionally stressed as students of color and low-income students bore the brunt of COVID-19’s impact.

How has this confluence of factors affected the mental health, the mindsets, and the attitudes towards work for these young professionals? What we learned may leave even the most employee-friendly organizations feeling unprepared to address the levels of anxiety, financial stress, and emotional exhaustion young professionals are reporting. These findings also provide some important insights into how employers can better support their younger workers; and give colleges and universities impetus to re-examine how they prepare students for career and life.

# KEY FINDINGS

## 1. MORE THAN HALF OF YOUNG PROFESSIONALS REPORT EMOTIONAL OR MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES, AND THESE CHALLENGES VARY BY GENDER AND RACE.

- ▷ More than half (51%) of young professionals surveyed reported needing help for emotional or mental health problems in the past year. 43% screened positive for anxiety; 31% for depression. Women reported worse mental health than men, with 68% of males self-reporting good or excellent mental health, compared to 45% of females.
- ▷ Black and Asian American respondents reported better overall mental health than their white peers (60% and 63%, respectively, said they have good or excellent mental health, compared to 52% of white and 49% of Hispanic respondents). However, Black respondents were less likely to feel part of the work community than their white peers (50% vs 68%); and were less likely to say they have colleagues who would support them if struggling compared to their white counterparts (52% vs 73%).

## 2. BURNOUT IS A PROBLEM AMONG YOUNG PROFESSIONALS, AND IT PLAYS A ROLE IN THEIR ANTICIPATED JOB TENURE.

- ▷ More than half of young professionals (53%) reported that they feel burnout at least once per week. (Burnout was defined as “a state of prolonged physical and psychological exhaustion, which is perceived as related to the person’s work.”)
- ▷ Of the young professionals who reported experiencing burnout weekly or more, 42% said they plan to leave their job in the next 12 months, compared to 32% of young professionals overall who said they plan to leave their job within the year.

## 3. YOUNG PROFESSIONALS SEE THEIR WORK ENVIRONMENT AS A NEGATIVE CONTRIBUTOR TO THEIR OVERALL MENTAL WELLBEING.

- ▷ More than a third (38%) of young professionals said that the environment at their workplace negatively impacts employee mental health and wellbeing.
- ▷ Nearly half (45%) of young professionals believed their work environment has taken a negative toll on their own mental health in the previous year.

## 4. MORE FINANCIAL STRESS IS ASSOCIATED WITH WORSE MENTAL WELLBEING.

- ▷ Nearly half (46%) of young professionals described their financial situation as always or often stressful.
- ▷ 61% of those with more financial stress rated their own mental health as fair or poor compared to 31% of those with lower financial stress.
- ▷ More than half (56%) of young professionals with higher financial stress said that work has taken a toll on their mental health in the previous year, compared to 37% of those with lower financial stress.

## **5. COLLEGE IS NOT STRONGLY PERCEIVED AS PREPARING STUDENTS EMOTIONALLY FOR THE WORKFORCE.**

- ▷ More than one third (39%) of respondents said their college did not help them develop skills to prepare them for the emotional or behavioral impact of the transition to the workplace.
- ▷ Of those who said their college did provide support (also 39%), majorities named peer relationships (57%) and extracurriculars (51%) as influential experiences.

## **6. MANY YOUNG PROFESSIONALS BELIEVE THEIR WORKPLACES PRIORITIZE MENTAL HEALTH, BUT STRONG MAJORITIES ARE LOOKING FOR MORE SUPPORT.**

- ▷ Nearly half (46%) of young professionals said mental health is a priority at their workplace. A quarter said it is not. Less than half (41%) said there are adequate resources to support employee mental health. Overall, 58% agreed that their workplace should invest more in mental health resources, with nearly two-thirds (64%) of women agreeing with that statement.
- ▷ Interest in mental health resources was high among young professionals, particularly if offered for free. If offered, 82% said they would engage with mental health days, 67% would be likely to engage with resources to help employees find mental health care, and 68% would be likely to engage with mental health support groups.

## **7. THOSE WHO REACH OUT ABOUT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH FEEL NEAR UNIVERSAL SUPPORT FROM THEIR COLLEAGUES.**

- ▷ Nearly a third (29%) reported having reached out to someone at work about a mental health problem they felt was affecting their job performance/productivity.
- ▷ Of those who have spoken to someone at their workplace, 91% said the response from the person to whom they reached out was either very or somewhat supportive.

## **8. SUPERVISORS ARE SEEN AS A PRIMARY CONFIDANT FOR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES, THOUGH OUTREACH IS NOT PERCEIVED AS STRONG.**

- ▷ Almost half (43%) of young professionals said they would reach out to their supervisor if they had a mental health problem that they believed was affecting their job performance/productivity.
- ▷ Those who said their supervisor has reached out to them about their mental health often were much more likely to say their mental health is good or excellent.
- ▷ A majority (65%) reported that their supervisor has either never (36%) or rarely (29%) reached out to them about their mental wellbeing.

# Survey Findings

## YOUNG PROFESSIONALS REPORT MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES, BUT PRESENT SOME SIGNS OF FLOURISHING.

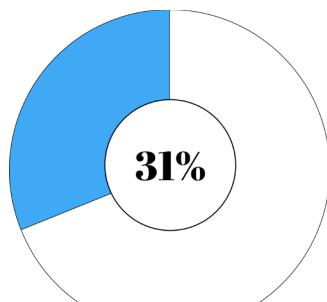
Our findings show that once in the workplace, young people continue to struggle mentally and emotionally. Based on responses to the Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4), a validated screening tool for anxiety and depression, 31% of recent graduates met the criteria for depression, and 43% met the criteria for anxiety. The majority (51%) also

reported needing help for mental or emotional problems in the last year. Sixty-two percent said they received mental health treatment, including counseling, therapy, or medications, at some point during their lives.

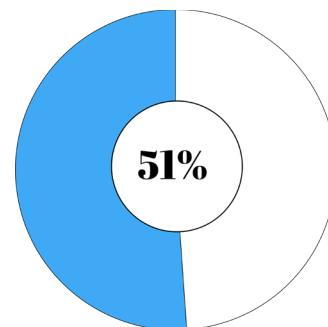
### ***Demographic Differences in Mental Health Status***

Young professionals from certain demographic groups appear more likely than others to be experiencing mental health challenges. Primarily, gender and financial circumstance

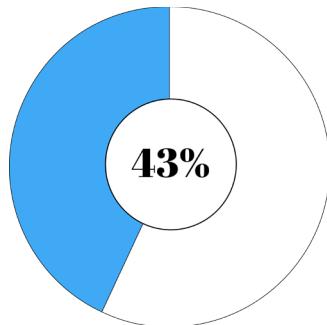
**SCREENED  
POSITIVE FOR  
DEPRESSION**



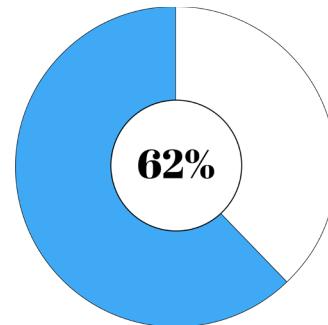
**NEEDED HELP  
FOR A MENTAL  
HEALTH ISSUE  
IN THE PAST  
YEAR**



**SCREENED  
POSITIVE FOR  
ANXIETY**



**HAVE RECEIVED  
MENTAL HEALTH  
SERVICES IN  
THEIR LIFETIME**

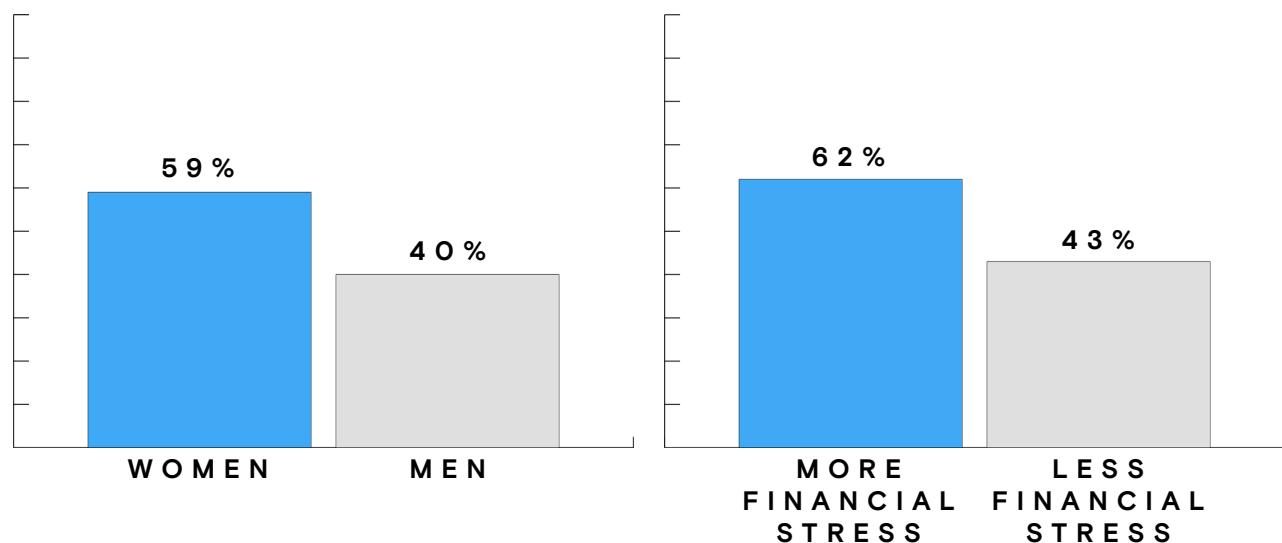


emerged as decisive variables: 59% of women compared to 40% of men reported needing help for a mental health problem in the last year; similarly, 55% of women rated their own mental health as fair or poor compared to 31% of males. These data reflect a commonly observed finding that females (including females in college) tend to report worse mental wellbeing and higher levels of mental health treatment (Terlizzi EP and Norris T, 2021; Eisenberg, D et al, 2021, National College Health Assessment, American College Health Association, 2021). The sample was not large enough to provide analysis on gender minorities (i.e., transgender (n=12), gender non-conforming (n=12) or nonbinary (n=15)). Young Black and Asian American professionals were more likely than some other racial groups to report their own mental health as good or excellent (60% and 63% respectively, compared to 52% of white respondents and 49% of Hispanic respondents).

### ***Amid Anxiety and Depression, Young Professionals Also Present Some Signs of Flourishing***

Despite their apparent mental health concerns, high numbers of young professionals reported feelings and attitudes consistent with flourishing. Three-quarters of respondents (75%) said that they are optimistic about their future, while nearly three-quarters (72%) said that they “lead a purposeful and meaningful life.” Even more, 85% reported that they are “competent and capable in the activities that are important to [them].” (Note: The questionnaire did not include a full flourishing scale and as such, these findings do not convey the prevalence of flourishing in this population.)

## **GRAPH 1: YOUNG PROFESSIONALS WHO NEEDED HELP FOR A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM IN THE LAST YEAR**



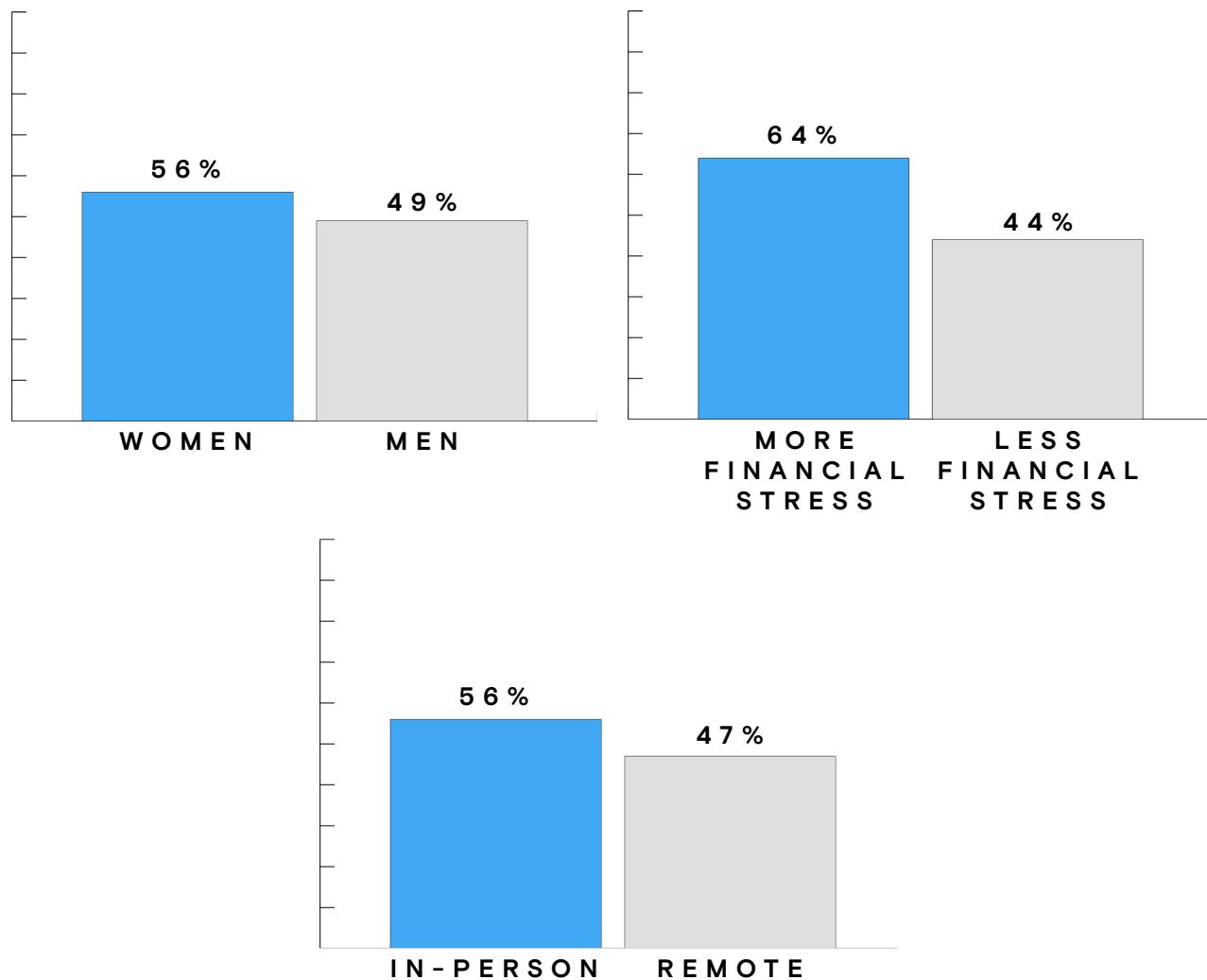
## YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ARE EXPERIENCING BURNOUT AT HIGH RATES

Burnout emerged as a significant problem across demographic groups. More than half (53%) of recent graduates indicated they experience feelings of burnout, defined as “a state of prolonged physical and psychological exhaustion,” at least weekly.

Women appear to suffer more from burnout than men (56% of women reported feeling burnout at least weekly

compared to 49% of men), and people with more financial stress suffer more from burnout than those with less (64% of those with high financial stress reported feeling burnout weekly compared to 44% of those with low financial stress). Where burnout numbers deviated from overall mental health is for remote and in-person workers. While remote workers were more likely to rate their mental health as worse compared to in-person workers, 47% of remote workers said they experience weekly burnout compared to 56% of in-person workers.

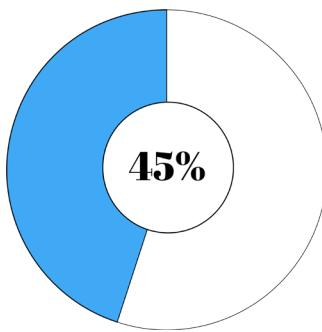
### GRAPH 2: YOUNG PROFESSIONALS EXPERIENCING BURNOUT AT LEAST WEEKLY



## MANY YOUNG ADULTS VIEW THEIR WORK ENVIRONMENT AS A NEGATIVE CONTRIBUTOR TO THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

More than one third (38%) of young professionals said that the environment at their workplace negatively impacts employee mental health and wellbeing. Close to half (45%) reported that their job took a negative toll on their own mental health and wellbeing at some point in the last year. Women and Hispanic workers were more likely to say that their job has taken a toll on their mental health. More than half (53%) of women said that work has taken a toll on their mental health, versus 37% of men. Fifty-six percent of Hispanic respondents said their job has taken a toll compared to 47% of white, 42% of Black, and 37% of Asian American respondents.

SAY THEIR JOB HAS TAKEN A NEGATIVE TOLL ON THEIR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN THE PAST YEAR



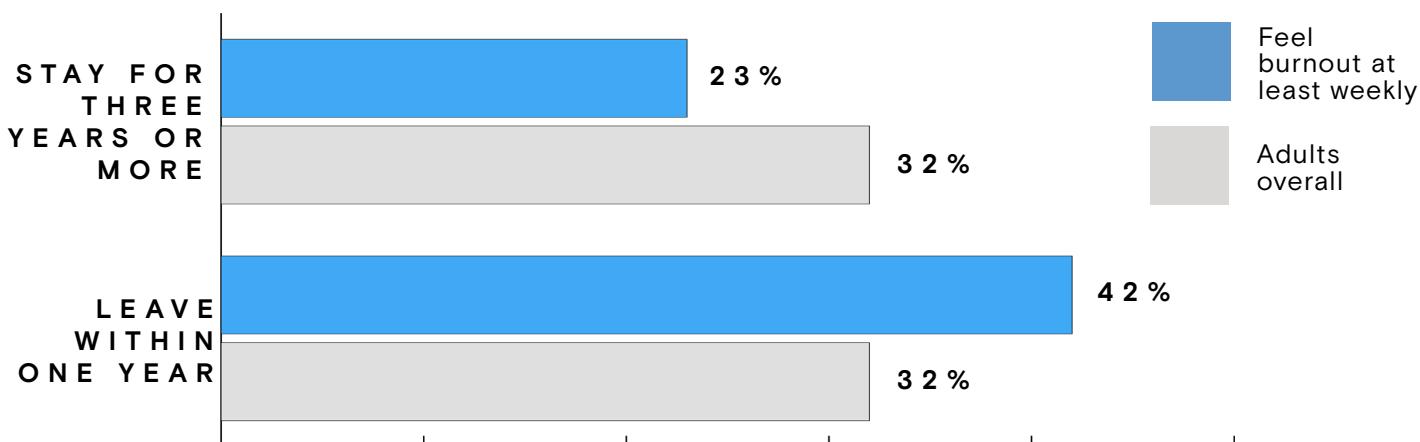
## MENTAL WELLBEING AND WORKPLACE CLIMATE IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LENGTH OF TIME YOUNG PROFESSIONALS PLAN TO STAY AT THEIR JOBS

Several measures of mental wellbeing were found to be associated with the length of time young professionals said they are planning to stay at their current job. Of respondents who rated their own mental health as fair or poor, 36% said they plan to leave their job within the year, compared to 29% of those with good or excellent mental health. Likewise, 26% of people who rated their own mental health as fair or poor said they plan to stay for three years or more, compared to 37% of those with good or excellent mental health.

### Burnout and Plans to Leave Job

An even starker divergence is seen among those who said they feel burnout at least weekly. Forty-two percent of young professionals who feel burnout at least weekly said they plan to leave their job within the year, compared to 32% of young professionals overall. Further, only 23% of those feeling burnout at least weekly said they will stay three or more years, versus 32% of those feeling burnout monthly or less. An identical pattern is seen among those who said

**GRAPH 3: BURNOUT AND PLANS TO LEAVE JOB**



their job has taken a toll on their mental health in the past 12 months: 42% of those young professionals said they plan leave their job within the year and 23% said they will stay three or more years.

### ***Factors Keeping Young Professionals at their Jobs***

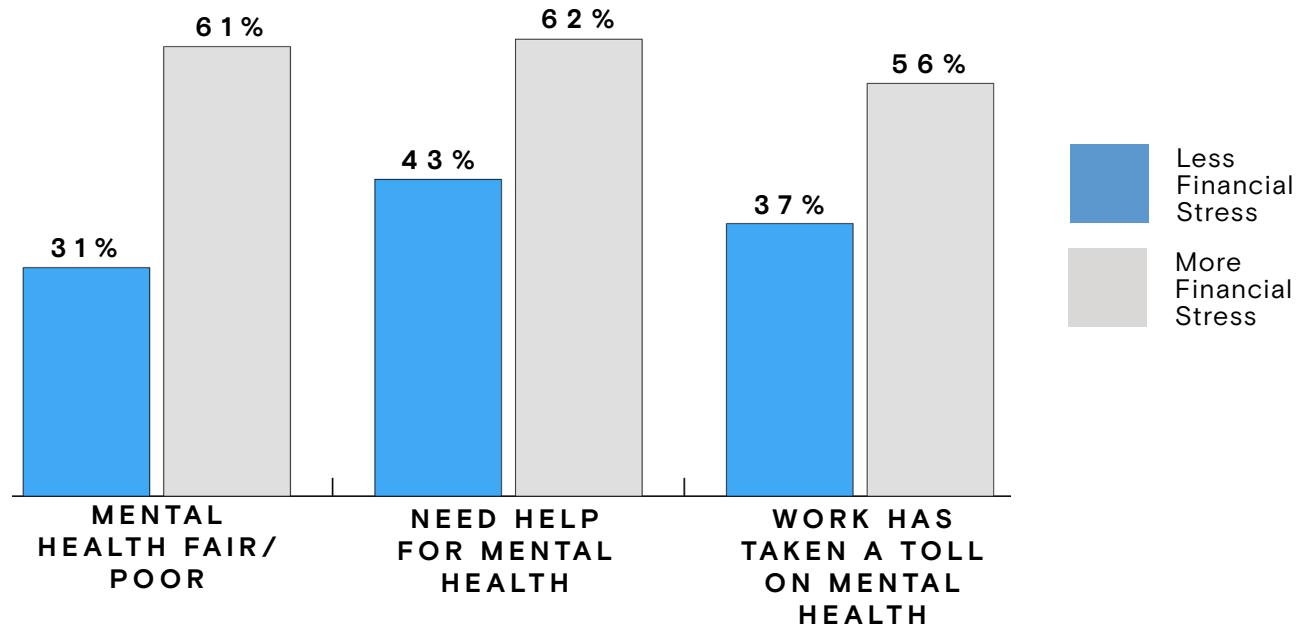
While burnout may encourage young professionals to consider leaving their current job, other factors may be influencing their decision to stay. When recent graduates considered the reasons keeping them at their current jobs, stability and salary emerged as the most important to them. Specifically, 49% of respondents said stability is keeping them where they are, and 44% said the same for their salary. These items were more influential than work-life balance (42%), enjoying the nature of their work (41%), or interest in their industry (38%). Among the least important factors were opportunities for advancement (25%), not having enough time/resources to job search (10%), and mental health support (6%). The low number of respondents indicating that mental health support is a

factor keeping them at their current jobs may be surprising given the association between burnout and plans to leave their current jobs. However, it could be a reflection of the lower levels of support that young professionals perceive to be offered at their current workplaces, or a perception that changing jobs or workplaces would not meaningfully change this level of support.

### **FINANCIAL STRESS IS ASSOCIATED WITH POOR MENTAL HEALTH**

Nearly half (46%) of young professionals described their financial situation as always or often stressful (described in this report as “high financial stress”). Fifty four percent reported that their financial situation is sometimes (35%), rarely (16%) or never (3%) stressful (described as “low financial stress”). Respondents with more financial stress were more likely to rate their mental health as poor and report needing help for a mental health problem in the previous year. Sixty-one percent of those with more financial stress rated their own mental health as fair or poor

## **GRAPH 4: FINANCIAL STRESS AND MENTAL WELLBEING**



compared to 31% with lower financial stress. Similarly, 62% of those with more financial stress said they needed help for emotional or mental health problems in the previous 12 months compared to 43% with less financial stress.

Young professionals with higher financial stress were also more likely to say that work has taken a toll on their mental health in the previous year. Fifty-six percent of young professionals with higher financial stress said that work has taken a toll on their mental health, compared to 37% of those with lower financial stress. Young professionals with higher financial stress were also less likely to feel part of the community at work (57% compared to 69% of those with lower financial stress).

### ***Insurance Issues and Ability to Pay***

Disparities were also observed in whether young professionals believed their insurance plan met their needs for mental health services and whether they said it has been difficult to pay for mental health care in the past year. While a small proportion of young professionals overall found their health insurance plan to be inadequate (17%) or that it has been difficult to pay for mental health care (24%), those numbers were higher for those with higher financial stress. Twenty-three percent of those with higher financial stress said their insurance coverage is inadequate compared to 12% with lower financial stress. A larger disparity is seen for ability to pay for services; 35% of those with higher financial stress have found it difficult to pay for care this year (compared to 16% with lower financial stress). As this group is more affected by the ability to pay for these services, it is imperative to better understand the challenges they are facing.

### **HIGHER EDUCATION'S ROLE IN EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH PREPAREDNESS CALLED INTO QUESTION**

When asked whether college helped them develop the skills needed to prepare them for the emotional impact of the

transition to the workplace, respondents were split: 39% said college helped them develop emotional impact skills needed for the transition to work; 39% said it did not. While there is some argument over the role of higher education in American life – whether it should simply impart skills and knowledge or whether students should be prepared to thrive in their post-graduate lives – it is clear that many in this cohort do not feel that their education adequately stewarded them towards success in this critical transition. Fifty percent of respondents with high financial stress said that college did not help them prepare. Those who said it did help them prepare identified relationships with peers (57%) and extracurriculars (51%) as most helpful in preparing them emotionally for the workplace, above mental health counseling (43%) or career services (40%). These findings raise questions about how proactive colleges are in including emotional and mental health in their career preparedness strategies or in their pedagogy.

Interestingly, over half (53%) of respondents reported better mental health now than when in college (with 21% reporting their mental health is significantly better now). Black respondents were more likely to report that their mental health is better now than in college (63% versus 54% of white respondents). Considering the substantial rates of anxiety, depression and burnout respondents reported in this survey, this finding shows the depth of emotional distress experienced by some while they were college students, particularly Black students. This suggests there is still much work to do in addressing the college mental health crisis, and in closing racial gaps.

### **MANY YOUNG PROFESSIONALS BELIEVE THEIR EMPLOYERS VALUE MENTAL HEALTH BUT ARE LOOKING FOR MORE SUPPORT**

Nearly half (46%) of young professionals believed that mental health is a priority at their workplace, though 25% said it

is not. While 46% said that their workplace encourages open discussion about mental wellbeing, nearly a quarter (24%) disagreed. Women and in-person workers were more likely to say that their workplace does not encourage open discussion about mental health. Less than half (41%) of young professionals said there are adequate resources to support employee mental health, and over half (58%) agreed that their company should invest more in mental health resources.

### ***Young Professionals Indicate a Willingness to Engage with Workplace Mental Health Programs***

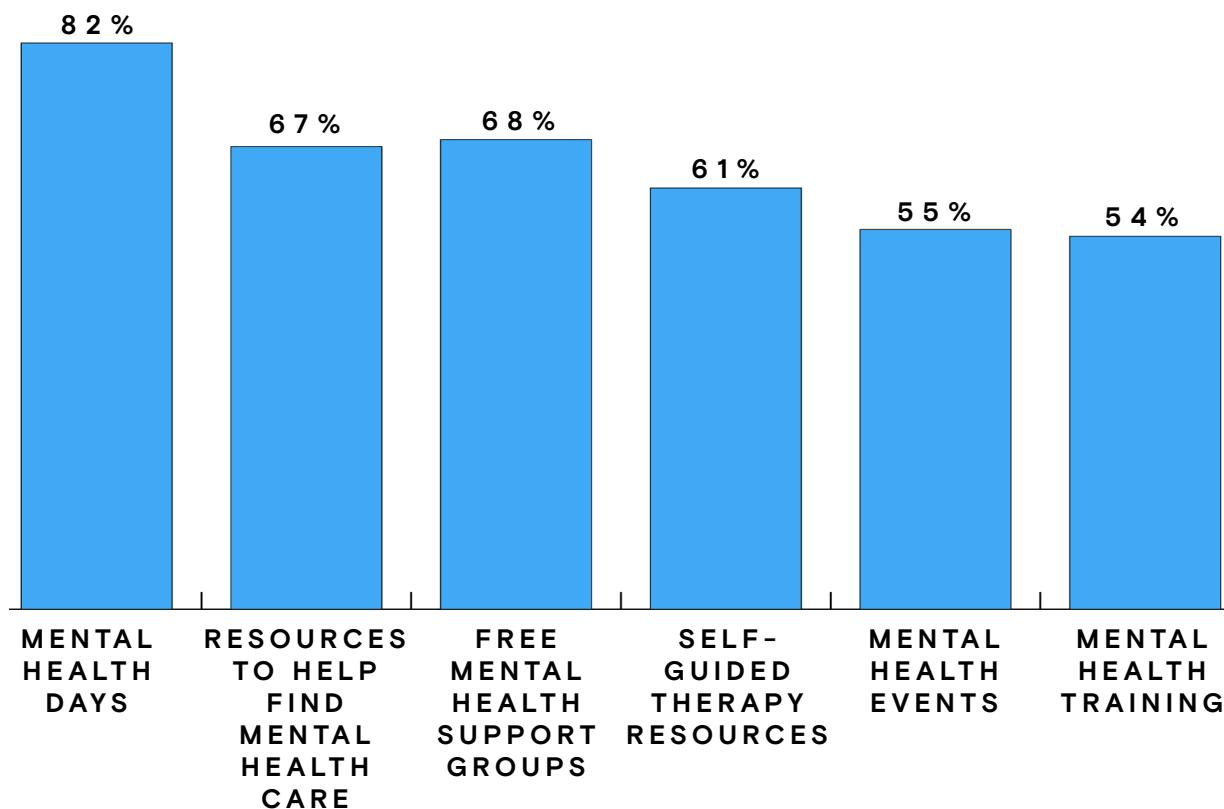
Young professionals also indicated a likelihood to engage with mental health policies and programs offered by their employer, especially those offered at no cost. A large majority (82%) of young professionals said they would be likely to engage with mental health days at their place of employment if they were offered. A majority also said they would be likely to engage with resources to help

employees find mental health care (67%), free mental health support groups (68%), and self-guided therapy resources (61%) at their place of employment if it were offered. Over half (55%) said they would be likely to engage with mental health-oriented events, and 54% said they would be likely to engage with mental health/gatekeeper training if it were offered. Respondents with high financial stress were more likely to say they would use all policies, programs or initiatives offered. Hybrid employees and women were also more likely to say they would use all the all policies, programs, or initiatives examined.

### **RESPONSE TO WORKPLACE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT AN INDIVIDUAL'S MENTAL HEALTH OVERWHELMINGLY PERCEIVED AS SUPPORTIVE**

Nearly a third (29%) of young professionals said they have reached out to someone at work about a mental health problem they felt was affecting their job

## **GRAPH 5: IF OFFERED THROUGH THEIR WORKPLACE, YOUNG PROFESSIONALS WOULD LIKELY ENGAGE WITH:**



performance/productivity in the past year. Overwhelmingly (91%), those who have spoken to someone at work said the response was supportive. This tells us that young professionals who speak out about their mental health at their workplace feel validated and supported, which is a promising indication that discussing mental health at work may become more of a norm for this generation. As stigma in discussing mental health decreases in the workplace, as it has in the college setting, young workers can feel more confident that their candor will be positively received.

### **SUPERVISORS ARE THE PRIMARY CONFIDANT FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS FACING MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES AT WORK, BUT MORE OUTREACH IS NEEDED**

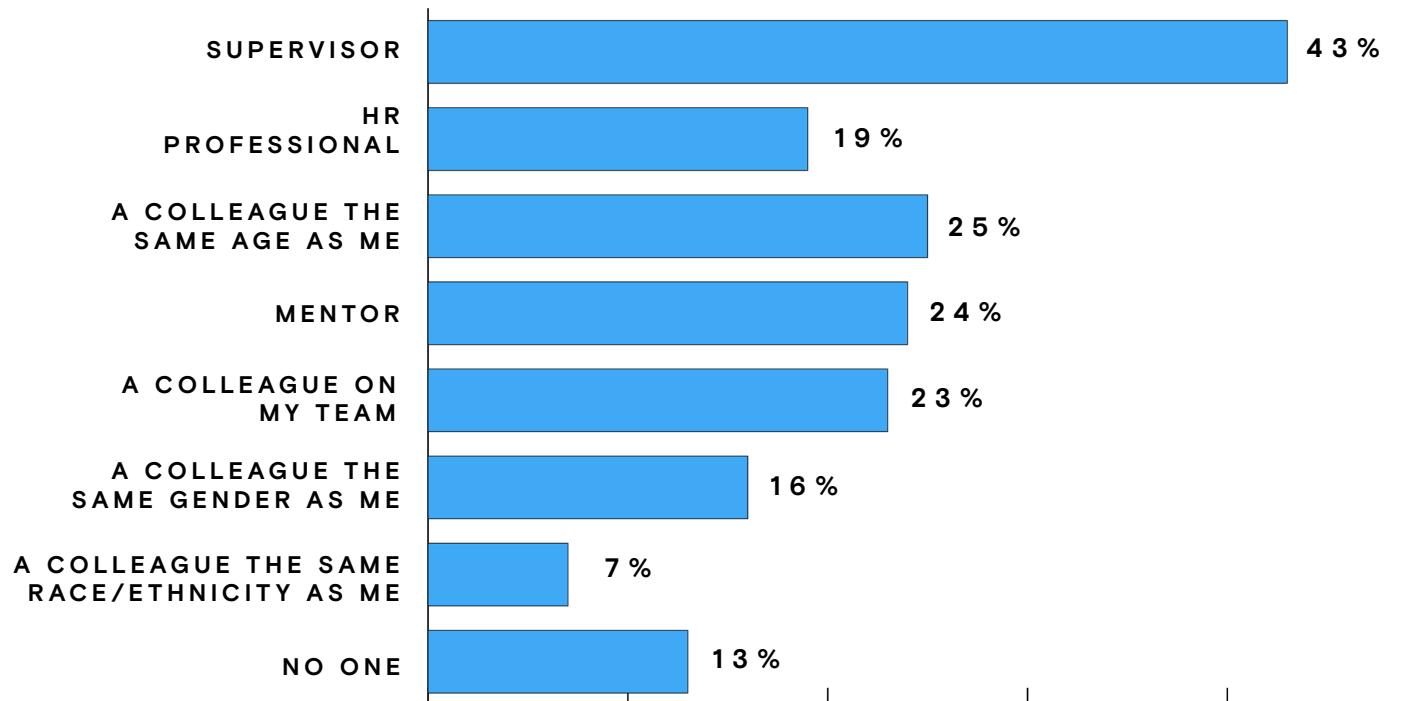
When experiencing a mental health issue

they believed to be affecting their performance at work, young professionals reported turning to their supervisors before all other colleagues at work. Forty-three percent said that they would reach out to a supervisor – much more so than an HR professional (19%). This could be a reason for supervisors to be educated on what to do when approached by one of their subordinates.

However, young professionals noted little outreach from their supervisors regarding mental wellbeing. A majority (65%) reported that their supervisor has either never (36%) or rarely (29%) reached out to them about their mental wellbeing.

Young professionals also reported that they would turn to “another colleague my age” (25%), a mentor (24%), “another colleague on my team” (23%), “another colleague who is the same gender as me”

### **GRAPH 6: WHEN EXPERIENCING A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE THEY BELIEVE TO BE AFFECTING THEIR WORK PERFORMANCE/PRODUCTIVITY, YOUNG PROFESSIONALS WOULD TURN TO:**



(16%), and “a colleague who has the same racial/ethnic background as me” (7%). Only 13% responded that they would not speak with anyone if they had a mental health problem that they believed was affecting their job performance, possibly indicating a need for a more universal education solution.

If experiencing serious emotional distress in general, young professionals said they prefer speaking to friends (64%) or family (56%), which echoes research in college students showing they prefer to turn first to their peers. Only 36% reported that they would talk to a professional clinician if they were experiencing serious emotional distress.

### **YOUNG PROFESSIONALS SEE THEMSELVES AS PART OF A COMMUNITY AT WORK, BUT TO VARYING DEGREES**

A majority of young professionals see themselves as part of the community where they work (64%), though this is lower for remote workers (55%) compared to in-person workers (68%). Over two-thirds (69%) said they have colleagues that would support them if they were going through a difficult time. Twenty-nine percent reported that in the past year, they have spoken with someone at work about mental health problems that they felt were affecting their job performance or productivity, with those who have done so overwhelmingly reporting a supportive response (91%).

#### ***Demographic Differences in Feeling Part of a Community at Work***

BIPOC young professionals were less likely to feel part of the community at their workplace than their white counterparts. Only half of Black respondents see themselves as part of the community at work, compared to 68% of white respondents. Fifty-five percent of Hispanic and 57% of Asian American respondents reported seeing themselves as part of the community. An even more significant disparity is seen when young professionals described whether or not they have colleagues who would support them if they were going through difficult times. Only 52% of

Black respondents agreed, compared to 73% of white respondents, 63% of Asian Americans, and 64% of Hispanic young professionals. Previous research has observed that racial and ethnic minorities report lower belonging than their peers in four-year colleges, the vast majority of which are predominantly white institutions. (Gopalan and Brady, 2019). This disparity is critical given the link between belonging and academic success. These findings suggest that the perception of lower belonging may carry into the workplace.

### **NOT ALL YOUNG PROFESSIONALS KNOW WHERE TO GET HELP**

Some disparities exist in knowledge around help-seeking for young professionals themselves, as well as how to help their colleagues. While a large majority of young professionals (71%) know where to access resources if they needed to seek professional help for their mental or emotional health, 17% indicated they would not know. Certain demographic groups reported lower levels of knowledge of resources, including Black (66% said they would know where to access resources), Hispanic (64%), and Asian American respondents (61%), compared to 74% of white respondents.

While a majority of respondents (56%) said they would know what to do to help a colleague struggling with their mental health, nearly a quarter (22%) said they would not. Smaller proportions of Black and Hispanic respondents (46% and 48%, respectively) said they would know how to help a colleague, compared to 58% of white respondents and 56% of Asian American respondents. This lack of knowledge over accessing resources and helping colleagues is concerning given the substantial proportion of employees who reported that they would turn to their colleagues when experiencing a mental health issue. This again indicates the need for education around mental health and help-seeking which, as noted above, over half indicated they would be likely to engage with if it were offered.

# Discussion § Implications

According to this survey, substantial numbers of young people in their early careers are reporting poor mental health, particularly anxiety and burnout, suggesting the mental health issues college students have reported over the past decade endure well into their twenties. While not surprising, this brings the workforce into focus as a new frontier in addressing the country's young adult mental health crisis with a number of unprecedented variables.

Not only do today's young people report more mental health challenges than older generations (American Psychological Association, 2018; Miron et al, 2019), they feel less stigma around mental health (Anxiety and Depression Association of America, 2015). They have also received help for their mental health at rates that far surpass their elders (American Psychological Association, 2018). As these graduates enter the workforce, their employers will continue to be met with new challenges in navigating how to best support their younger employees' wellbeing and the health of their organizations overall. Employers may be unprepared for this new generation of workers as the rules around reporting and addressing mental health and wellbeing shift.

What is perhaps most alarming about these findings is the fact that nearly half of the young professionals surveyed perceive their jobs as worsening their mental health. Given the correlation between good mental health and productivity, (Lerner and Henke, 2008; Dewa et al, 2011) and the association with employee lengths of stay as observed in these data, these findings present a significant challenge for a working world that is still adjusting to the monumental changes brought on by the global pandemic, the mental health ramifications of which we have yet to understand, particularly for early career professionals.

Could the non-stop presence of the screen-based communication that saved our industries contribute to the burnout our young people are now reporting? Does work from home mean no life outside of work? Or, for many, the ability to retreat into comfortable isolation? The pandemic arrived during a period of significant discontent and incivility in this country, which divided social communities and reopened deep racial wounds. It also provided further proof of the uncertainty of the world with global and geopolitical events, including war, recession, and climate threat, creating anxiety for many.

Young workers' tepid response to the question regarding emotional preparedness provided by college is a message for higher education. This could include improvements in many areas from incorporating mental health support literacy into career counseling to teaching approaches that engender identity and agency to better aligning a person's strengths and sense of purpose to their choice of career. Given recent Gallup data that suggest that "liking what you do" is the strongest indicator of life-long wellbeing, institutions should consider placing more emphasis on steering students towards careers that bring them happiness as well as a means to make money.

Burnout among young professionals, a phenomenon that frequently affects 28% of all US employees (Gallup, 2020), should be closely examined from various angles, including its relationship to young peoples' choices of profession and the rationale behind that choice. Due to the sample size in this survey, this research was not able to provide burnout data by industry. Further research is warranted. However, recent data show that how people experience their workload has a stronger influence on burnout than how many hours they work; people who like their jobs may work just as much, but experience far less burnout than their peers who do not (Gallup, 2020). Echoing the Gallup research, this survey shows respondents have high levels of burnout while at the same time name salary and stability as reasons for staying in their jobs over enjoying the nature of their work or interest in their industry. This suggests that young people would benefit from a cultural shift in which interest in a field or passion around a specific job is prioritized over salary (and a society in which employees are paid a wage that allows them to pursue the jobs that interest them).

From the workplace perspective, these findings can help employers navigate some of the new territory that is emerging around employee mental health support. Despite the concerning prevalence numbers, there is some promising information here about the value of providing opportunities for young employees to speak about their mental health at work. The overwhelmingly positive response numbers given by those who reached out indicate the workplace may be adjusting to, and embracing of, the decreased stigma that is occurring here, as it did on college campuses.

Employers should take it as a good sign that young professionals see their supervisors as confidants and are open to discussing wellbeing with them, more so than human resource professionals. This is evidence that more outreach by supervisors to their employees about their mental health is welcome and beneficial. It also indicates that organizational leadership cannot leave the mental health of their employees to any one office, but should incorporate mental health awareness and support throughout the work environment. Providing more guidance at all levels on these conversations and opportunities for them to occur could go a long way in changing how employees view their workplace culture, especially given that 13% are reporting they would not reach out to anyone at their office about a mental health issue affecting their performance.

These findings clearly indicate that early career professionals want more support for their mental health, whether that be in benefit packages or within the workplace, and they are eager to participate in these programs. In fact, despite a concerning gap in knowledge around how to help their colleagues, over half of young professionals indicate they would be interested in gatekeeper training to learn about how to help others if it were offered by their employer.

Building strong workplace communities is an important goal for most organizations, particularly given the disruption of COVID-19. Remote workers reporting poorer mental health and feeling less a part of a community should be key takeaways.

Even more importantly, we see from this data that workplace environments are not perceived as particularly welcoming or supportive of diverse employees, specifically BIPOC employees. Many among this population report not feeling part of the community or not having close colleagues; nor do they know where to turn for resources. Creating stronger workplace communities where people connect and work together, even if remote or hybrid, can increase all young employees' sense of belonging and can start to build the diverse workforces that will drive the success of today's top organizations.

Finally, we hope these findings provide an opportunity for higher education and employer leaders to see themselves as partners in prioritizing the mental health and wellbeing of young people, as what occurs in one domain so strongly influences the other.

# Appendix

## APPENDIX I. REFERENCES

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