Wellbeing in Research:
Small steps towards better mental health
November 2022

@opiniumresearch

@TweetMRS
This year we have looked at the emerging trends, year or year comparisons whilst also looking at what else could be impacting our mental wellbeing.
Defining mental health

A state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, **can work productively and fruitfully**, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

World Health Organisation
Who we spoke to:

Online quantitative study
10 minutes in length
706 market research and insight professionals

Topic areas:
Demographics
Warwick-Edinburgh
Mental Wellbeing
Scale
Overall wellbeing
Mental health at work
Support at work
Work environment

Fieldwork was conducted between July & August 2022
Mental wellbeing landscape
Attitudes & consequences
Introduction to our mental wellbeing measure

**Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale**

The positive nature of these statements marks the WEMWBS out from other mental health wellbeing scales in that it **captures feeling good and functioning well**, not just an absence of mental ill-health, which is important as mental wellbeing is about thriving, and not just surviving.

Taking an **average of their fourteen answers a wellbeing score can be assigned to an individual**. (Scale ranges from 14 to 70). By looking at this score the mental wellbeing of an individual can be **determined in terms of whether it falls above or below the national average**. The scale enables us to quantify mental wellbeing, thus promoting wider understanding of mental wellbeing as a whole.

A further use of the scale is to encourage effective improvement of mental wellbeing for the individual, by tracking scores over time, and to equip organisations and wider society to support the enhancement of mental wellbeing.
Slight increase in mental wellbeing scores since 2021

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale Results

Wellbeing scores (WEMWBS)

- Research Professionals
- UK workers

WEMWBS: “Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please select the answer option that best describes your experience of each statement over the last 2 weeks.”

(Base: all participants, 2022: 706, 2021: 559 2020: 404; 2019: 1008)
Experiences of poor mental health has reduced slightly

83%
Have experienced poor mental health in the last 12 months vs 87% in 2021

16%
Have been diagnosed with a mental health condition.

Poor mental health experienced over the last 12 months (2022 vs. 2021)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling low/ down</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhaustion/ burnout</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panic attacks</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Q1. Thinking about the last twelve months, have you experienced any of the following? Please select all that apply.” and MH1. “Are you currently diagnosed with any mental health conditions?”

(Base for Q1: All answering, 696. Base for MH1: All answering, 692.)
The Mind-Body divide

Half (47%) of market researchers who struggled with their physical health took time

VS.

Less than a fifth (19%) of market researchers who struggled with their mental health took time off

Q3. “Did you take any time off work to rest / recover from each of the following? Please think about the most recent time you experienced this.” (Base: those who struggled with their mental health (571), those who struggled with their physical health (599).)
Research professionals take less time off than average UK workers

Q3. “Did you take any time off work to rest/ recover from each of the following?”
(Base: All participants who experienced a mental health problem in past 12 months, 578.)
Perceived problems of severity and workload again remains a barrier

Top 5 reasons for not taking time off
(base: those who didn’t take time off)

- It wasn't bad enough to take a day off work: 60% (2022) vs. 57% (2021)
- I had too much to do at work: 52% (2022) vs. 53% (2021)
- I wanted to keep it to myself: 42% (2022) vs. 40% (2021)
- I don't think it's a valid reason to take time off work: 30% (2022) vs. 26% (2021)
- I didn't want to ask for time off: 28% (2022) vs. 33% (2021)

Q4. “Why didn’t you take time off work for each of the following?”
(Base: All who didn’t take time off for mental health, 488.)
Causes and strains

What are the drivers of poor mental wellbeing?
Stress remains a key factor

Top sources of stress:

- Workload / having too much to do – 54%
- Impending deadlines / targets – 47%
- The risk involved in getting projects wrong – 37%
- Poor work-life balance – 34%
- Demands from clients – 34%

Find their job highly stressful compared to 24% in 2021

20%
There is a rise in those feeling able to talk to their manager about their mental health

**Attitudes towards mental health at work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My workplace takes the mental health and wellbeing of their employees seriously</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can talk to my manager openly about my mental health</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can talk to my colleagues about my mental health and wellbeing</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would feel embarrassed if my colleagues discovered I was struggling with my mental health</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t think my workplace is doing enough to help employees with their mental health</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
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Q10. “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?”
(Base: All answering, 607.)
I think **encouraging an open and accepting atmosphere** would be a good start. I don’t currently feel like I can call in sick in the morning if I’ve had a bad night and felt anxious/burnt out/stressed because I am the most junior on my team so wouldn’t want it to look bad on me and I am not sure if this would be understood anyway.

Part of my issues are driven from mental health strains beyond work and **made worse by intense work pressures**. **Effective resourcing and policing** of work hours to support staff would be the biggest support I could accept.
Working preferences

Hybrid working changing the way we work
The way we work has changed

1. Hybrid working has changed the way we use the office
2. Home working is perfect for individual work
3. Office no longer only place to work, but now its best place to collaborate
Hybrid working is here to stay

C5. “Moving forward, please state your preference for working in the following circumstances?”
(Base: All respondents, 706.)

- **Mix of days working from home / office**: 69% prefer
- **Working from home full time**: 39% prefer
- **Working from site/office full time**: 9% prefer
We are feeling more positive about working from home

**Benefits of working from home**
- Better work life balance now: 75% agree, 54% disagree
- Not having to commute has improved my mental health: 73% agree, 63% disagree
- Feeling more relaxed working from home: 71% agree, 57% disagree

**Challenges of working from home**
- Find it hard to draw boundaries between work and rest: 48% agree, 57% disagree
- Working from makes me feel isolated: 37% agree, 46% disagree
- I struggle to stay in contact with my colleagues when working from home: 29% agree, 39% disagree

C4. “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about working from home?”
(Base: All answering, 671.)
The physical design of working environment

Ensuring the physical design supports wellbeing and productivity
The physical design of a working environment can have a real and significant impact upon employees’ wellbeing, satisfaction and productivity.
**Overall ambience of the working environment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical design</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stimulating</strong></td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appealing</strong></td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colourful</strong></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pleasant</strong></td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>81%</td>
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</table>

Q24b. "The following questions ask about your perception of the environment you work in when working from home... Spend a few minutes looking round you then read each item carefully and rate the working environment in terms of pairs of opposite adjectives." (Base: All answering, 671.)
Utilising design to support wellbeing for the future

- Biophilic design
- Lighten up
- Collaboration
- Colour
- Ergonomic furniture
- Temperature
Final thoughts

• Small improvements in mental wellbeing are beginning to show. Better wellbeing scores, a small drop in poor mental health, and lower levels of stress.

• However, still seeing the same barriers to workers not taking time off to protect their mental health, mostly because of workloads. Employers must continue to put in processes and procedures which reduce the burden.

• Working from home has been hugely beneficial to the mental wellbeing of those in the industry. It’s improved work-life balance, reduced stressful commutes, and handed workers greater autonomy.

• Hybrid working is here to stay and successful leaders will be those who allow their workers to offer flexibility in various work locations.

• In turn, it’s increasingly important to think about the physical and interior design of different work locations as a way of enhancing employees wellbeing and productivity.
Thank you
Any questions?