

Mental Health in the Workplace

Largest Study Ever Conducted of Canadian Workplace Mental Health and Depression

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Toronto, ON – In a Canadian Study of mental health in the Canadian workplace, these are just some of the findings on the issue conducted by Ipsos Reid for the Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental health and sponsored by the Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace. The study was carried out between October 29th and November 6th, 2007 in Canada and involved a full/part-time worker sample of 4122 individuals (1223 managers and 2788 non-managers).

Most (82%) Canadian Workers ‘Fulfilled’ with Their Job...

Speaking of the degree to which they are fulfilled with their jobs, a vast majority (82%) of Canadian workers indicate that they are ‘fully’ (23%) or ‘mostly fulfilled’ (59%) with their jobs. However, the results of the study reveal that managers are more likely (87%) to indicate that they are ‘fully’ (29%) or ‘mostly fulfilled’ (58%) with their jobs when compared to employees in a non-managerial capacity (80%), where fewer indicate that they are ‘fully’ (21%) or ‘mostly fulfilled’ (59%) with their jobs.

Furthermore, seven in ten (70%) employees indicate that their workplace is a healthy environment, once again with managers (74%) being slightly more inclined than non-managers (68%) to indicate that this is the case. Similarly, two thirds (65%) of workers say that

their employers recognize and appreciate the work that they do with managers being more likely (69%) than workers (63%) to believe that this is true.

Majority Believe Employers Give Sufficient Care and Flexibility To Employees for Personal Issues...

A majority (63%) of Canadian workers are of the opinion that their employer provides sufficient benefits such as health or dental plans, with managers being more likely (68%) than non-managers to indicate this (61%).

As another appraisal of their employers, seven in ten (71%) workers in a managerial (73%) or non-managerial role (70%) believe that their employer respects their work/life balance. Moreover, eight in ten (78%) workers say that their employer provides them with the flexibility to respond to personal or family responsibilities. However, managers (82%) are more likely to suggest that their employer is flexible in this regard than are non-managerial workers (70%).

Further, three quarters (74%) of workers say their employer is supportive when they have personal needs, with managers (79%) having a higher propensity to agree than non-managers (72%).

Managers Work Longer Hours, Take Less Time Off...

In a typical week, Canada workers, both part-time and full-time, say that they work an average of 39 hours a week, with managers claiming to work longer hours (44 hours) than non-managerial workers (37 hours).

And thinking about how many days per year they take off of work for various reasons, this is how the data stacked up:

- For physical illness, Canada workers take on average 3 sick days per year, with non-managers taking 3.2 days a year and managers taking 2.4 days a year.
- To care for a family member, workers take 1.6 days a year on average, with non-managers taking slightly more (1.6 days) time off than managers (1.4 days) for this reason.
- For mental health reasons such as stress, on average Canada workers take off 1.1 days per year for this reason and, interestingly, managers take less time off (0.8 days) per year than non-managers (1.3 days) do.

Awareness and Accommodation of Mental Health Issues in the Workplace...

Asking workers to think about the degree to which there is an awareness in the workplace of employees being stressed to the point of reduced productivity or requiring time off, nearly one half (46%) believe that this awareness exists; however, managers are more likely (50%) to suggest that this awareness exists than are non-managerial workers (44%).

Fewer (37%) workers say that their employers are aware of employees in their workplace who are coping with bouts of depression which may require them to take days off. Following the trends established in the data, managers (40%) are slightly more likely to indicate this than non-managers (36%). In a similar vein, one third (31%) of workers, 33% of managers and 31% of non-managers, believe that there is an awareness in their workplace of the possibility of employees having anxiety or panic disorders, and of the possibility that some individuals might require an extended leave of absence (3 months or more) to deal with a mental health issue (26% total: 27% managers, 25% non-managers).

Among those employees who are aware of the aforementioned conditions or circumstances, a majority believe that their employer has been accommodating to these needs. More specifically, seven in ten (69%) workers believe that their employer is either 'very' (25%) or 'somewhat' (45%) accommodating of those employees stressed to the point of reduced productivity or requiring time off, with managers being slightly more likely (71%) to say that their employers are 'very' (27%) or 'somewhat' (44%) accommodating than are non-managers (68% total, 23% 'very', 45% 'somewhat').

Three quarters (73%) of Canada workers believe that their employer is 'very' (26%) or 'somewhat' (47%) accommodating of employees with bouts of depression that may require them to take days off, with managers being slightly more likely (75% total, 28% very, 46% somewhat) than non-managers (72% total, 24% very, 48% somewhat) to believe this.

Seven in ten (71%) believe that their employer is 'very' (25%) or 'somewhat' (46%) accommodating of their employees who have anxiety or panic disorders, but in this instance non-managers have a higher propensity to agree (71%) that their employers are 'very' (23%) or 'somewhat' (48%) accommodating than the 70% of managers who say that their employers are 'very' (28%) or 'somewhat' accommodating (42%) in this regard.

Eight in ten (80%) workers, though, say that their employer is 'very' (35%) or 'somewhat' (45%) accommodating to their employees who would like to take an extended leave of absence to deal with mental health issues. Managers (82%) are more likely to say that their employers are either 'very' (38%) or 'somewhat' (44%) accommodative in this regard than are non-managers (79% total, 34% 'very', 46% 'somewhat').

Benefit Packages and Mental Health Services...

Thinking about their benefits packages, just under three quarters (63%) of workers, 65% of managers and 61% of non-managers, say that their health benefit package includes counselling or assessment therapy for mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety or stress. In fact, one quarter (25%) of these workers indicate that they have used their mental health benefits for services such as counselling or therapy to treat conditions like depression, stress or anxiety. Interestingly, managers and those in a non-managerial function are equally as likely to indicate that they have made use of such services available to them.

But some workers (19%) have had to access these mental health counselling or therapy services outside of their health benefit plan for treatment of depression, stress, or anxiety, once again with managers and executives being equally as likely to do so. This is perhaps not surprising, in light of the fact, only one in eight (13%) workers have access to their disability insurance benefits for matters related to mental health conditions such as depression, stress or anxiety.

Moreover, just two in ten (20%) workers are aware of any specific guidelines or policies in their workplace for dealing with or accommodating people with mental health conditions such as depression, stress or anxiety, with managers (27%) being more likely than (23%) non-managers to indicate that they are aware of this.

Two Thirds (66%) of Workers Claim to Know Something About Mental Health Conditions...

Two thirds (66%) of Canadian workers claim to know either 'a lot' (18%) or 'some' (48%) about mental health conditions like depression, with managers (68%) being more likely to



claim to know 'a lot' (18%) 'or some' (50%) than non-managers (65% total, 19% 'a lot', 47% 'some').

In fact, four in ten (39%) employees have sought information regarding mental health conditions like depression, with non-managers (39%) being just about as likely as managers (40%) to indicate that this is the case.

And in terms of where individuals are going to get their information, it appears that the most individuals are getting their information from medical professionals such as doctors, nurses and pharmacists (76%) as well as the internet (74%). Other sources of information include government health organizations (35%), family or friends (32%), non-governmental health organizations (16%), employers (11%), the media (10%), an insurance company (7%), a union (6%) or another source (7%).

If Workers were to Discover that a Colleague Suffered from Depression...

If workers were to discover that someone at their workplace was suffering from depression, a solid majority (68%) indicate that they would have the same level of confidence in their colleagues as before they learned of their condition; however, non-managers (69%) are more likely to suggest that they would feel this way than are managers (65%). Seven in ten (69%) workers, though, would expect that depressed worker to be less productive than before, with slightly more managers (71%) believing that this would be the case than non-managers (69%).

In a similar vein, three quarters (73%) of workers (78% of managers, 71% of non-managers) would be worried about their colleague's ability to assume majority responsibilities, and two

thirds (65%) of workers (68% of managers, 64% of non-managers) would be unsure about what to expect from their colleagues at work in light of their depression.

Despite all of these things, only a minority (38%) would consider these individuals to be less reliable than before they learned of their depression, with more managers (43%) indicating that they would think this than non-managers (36%).

Managing an Employee Who has Returned from a Mental Health

Leave...

Managers were asked to consider their reaction to an employee with diagnosed depression, who, after having left the company with permission for sick leave, returns after a three-month absence and appears to be all right, or for all intents and purposes, normal and productive. Thinking about the type of work employees under their supervision are required to do, four in ten (41%) managers would consider them immediately reliable upon their return to work, while a plurality (45%) indicate that they would only consider them to be reliable after having returned to the workplace for sometime under three months. Eight percent (8%) of managers say that it would take three to six months for them to consider the returned employee reliable, while 4% say that it would take six months to one year for this to occur. Just 1% believe that it would take a year or more, and another 1% say that they would never consider that employee to be reliable again.

Moreover, four in ten (43%) managers would immediately let that returned worker assume the responsibilities that they had held previously, while a similar proportion (42%) say that they would return the employee to regular duties before three months was over. One in ten (10%) say that they would return the employee to normal duties in three to six months, while 3% would do the same between six to twelve months after that employee returned to work.

Just 1% of managers would not return the employee to their previous responsibilities for a year or two, and another 1% would never do so.

And when it comes to considering that employee for promotion, 15% of managers would do so immediately, while one third (33%) say that they would consider this option in less than three months and one quarter (22%) would do so sometime between three and six months. Two in ten (19%) would consider that employee for advancement six months to one year later, while one in nine (11%) managers would do so a year or two after their employee returned back to work. Only 1% would never do so.

Three in Ten (30%) Know a Colleague Who Has Been Diagnosed with Depression by a Doctor...

Three in ten (30%) workers in Canada, 35% of managers and 28% of non-managers, claim to know of someone in their workplace who has been diagnosed with depression by a doctor. A similar proportion (27%) say they know of someone in their workplace that they suspect suffers from depression, but who they believe has not been diagnosed by a doctor. More managers (31%) than non-managers (25%) believe that they have a colleague that is in this situation.

More specifically, one in six (17%) managers say that they have someone who reports to them who has been diagnosed as having depression by a doctor, while just as many (18%) believe that there is someone who reports to them whom they suspect suffers from depression but they believe has not yet been diagnosed by a doctor. In fact, managers believe that they have 2.05 employees who report to them whom they believe are suffering from depression, whether diagnosed or not.



Trying to put a dollar amount on the cost of reduced efficiency and productivity to their business over the past twelve months due to depressed, stressed or anxious employees who report to them directly [depressed diagnosed or believe that they are depressed], based on an average of 2.05 depressed employees per manager, the total cost average for a reduced efficiency and productivity per year is \$14,579.74, which translates to a cost of \$7,112.07 per employee.

Managers believe that the cost to their business over the past twelve months due to absenteeism of depressed, stressed or anxious employees who report directly [depressed diagnosed or believe that they are depressed] to them cost their company, on average, \$9,919.70 a year per employee, which represents \$20,335.56 a year [based on the 2.05 employee average noted above.]

As a supervisor, most (83%) managers would agree that they consider it part of their job to intervene with an employee who they believe is showing signs of depression, while three in ten (29%) say that they have already personally intervened with an employee who they believe was showing signs of depression.

However, only a slim majority (55%) of managers claim to know what to do in order to help someone who reports to them claiming to have depression, and 46% of managers say they have a strong grasp of the policies at their company regarding mental health. This statistic is likely a result of the fact that just 18% of managers surveyed report having received training to help them identify and deal with employees who exhibit signs of depression.



One in six (18%) Workers report Having Been Diagnosed with Clinical Depression...

One in six (18%) employees in Canada report having been diagnosed by a doctor as being clinically depressed comprised of 18% of non-managers and 16% of managers. However, one in twelve (8%) employees (6% of managers, 9% of non-managers) believe that they themselves have depression even though they have not been clinically diagnosed with this condition.

This suggests a total of 26% of Canadian workers who have been either been diagnosed with depression (18%) or believe they have an undiagnosed condition of depression (8%).

An equal proportion (8%) of employees (6% of managers, 9% of non-managers) are taking prescription medication for their depression, while a similar proportion (6%) of managers (5%) and non-managers (7%) report being under the care of a physician for depression. Just 3% of employees, though, are currently undergoing counselling or therapy for their depression, while the same proportion (3%) report having been hospitalized for depression.

Of those who were diagnosed with depression, nearly two in ten (17%) report that it lasted for a few weeks or less, while three in ten (28%) indicate that they were depressed for a few months. Fourteen (14%) percent of workers say that they were depressed for about a year (14%), while 15% were depressed for one to two years, and 9% were depressed for three to four years. Nine (9%) percent report having been depressed for five to nine years, while an equal proportion (9%) report having been depressed for ten or more years.

Workers Offer Causes of their Depression...

Among individuals who have been diagnosed as being clinically depressed or believe that they suffer from depression even though they have never been diagnosed it, and think that the depression can be linked to any of the following possible circumstances or events, these are the events to which workers would link the cause of their depression:

- to a specific event in their life (64%); stress (62%); depression runs in the family (22%); neuron-chemical imbalance (17%); naturally predisposed to depression (13%); detrimental work environment, abusive co-workers or a boss (2%); result of a death of a family member or friend (1%); related to a health problem (1%); related to a series of events or multiple situations which compounded (1%); postpartum depression (1%); divorce (1%); finance issues or problems with money (1%).

For those 64% of individuals who believe that their depression was linked to a specific event in their life, the nature of the event was:

- divorced/separated/marital issues/relationship issues (26%); death in the family (18%); working too hard/too much (11%); lost my job (5%); involved in an accident (3%); dysfunctional family relationships (3%); underwent a serious medical operation (2%); suffered a physical illness (2%); abuse/abusive relationship (2%); had a baby/change in family situation regarding children (2%); involved in an accident (2%).

Majority Remain Silent About their Depression at Work...

However, it appears that many are keeping knowledge of their depression to themselves, with only a minority (36%) of those being diagnosed or believe that they could be diagnosed with depression indicating that they have told somebody about their depression. Managers

(41%) are more likely than non-managers (34%) to claim to have told someone in the workplace about their depression. The vast majority (76%) of these individuals who have told somebody about their depression have told their co-workers, followed by their supervisor (46%), their human resources personnel (17%), or the boss/owner of the business (2%).

Among those 64% who believe that they have depression or have been diagnosed with it but have not told anybody about it, most (62%) believe that it just isn't anybody else's business, while 11% are afraid that people will treat them differently. Other reasons for not telling anybody else at work about their depression include being embarrassed to admit that they suffer from depression (9%), that they no longer suffer from depression (4%), that they believe it would limit their chances of advancement (3%), that they could get fired or lose their job (3%), or that their depression does not impact their work in any way (3%).

Support for their Depression Comes From Numerous Sources...

Of those who have been diagnosed by a doctor or believe that they suffer from depression, in terms of coping with depression at work, here is where workers are going for solace:

- Most (88%) are getting 'a great deal' (75%) or 'some' (13%) support from their church, while just 13% are getting no support at all from this organization.
- Almost as many (84%) are getting 'a great deal' (64%) or 'some' (20%) support from their doctor, while others are getting 'not much' (4%) or 'no support at all' (12%) from their doctor.

- Eight in ten (77%) are getting ‘a great deal’ of support (41%) or ‘some support’ (35%) from their family, while 13% reporting getting ‘not much support’ and 11% get ‘no support at all’ from their family, which includes their extended family.
- A similar proportion (77%) are getting ‘a great deal’ (37%) or ‘some’ (40%) support from their friends, while 12% are getting ‘not much support’ and another 12% report getting ‘no support’ from their friends.
- Two thirds (64%) say that they get ‘a great deal’ (43%) or ‘some support’ (21%) from their spouse, while 10% report getting ‘not much support’ and, remarkably, 27% say they get ‘no support at all’ from their spouse.
- A majority (51%) of workers say that they get ‘a great deal’ (17%) or ‘some’ (34%) support from their co-workers, while others only get ‘not much’ (23%) or ‘no support at all’ (26%).
- Only a minority (47%) of workers say that their direct boss, manager or supervisor gives them ‘a great deal’ (18%) or ‘some’ (29%) support with their depression, while others say that they get ‘not much’ (20%) or ‘no support at all’ (33%) from their direct superior.

Depression, Stress, Anxiety Lead to Missed Work Days...

Two in ten (19%) workers across Canada say that in the last twelve months they have missed three or more work days due to depression, stress or anxiety, and these proportions are virtually identical when comparing managers (18%) with non-managerial workers (19%). More specifically, the following outlines the number of days or months these employees missed as a result of their condition:



- One to seven days: 49%; Eight to 31 days: 13%; One month: 2%; Two months: 2%; Three months: 2%; Four months: 3%; Five months: 1%; and Six months: 4%.
- Longer periods of time include Eight months: 1%; Nine months: 1%; Ten months: 1%; and 12 months: 4%

Despite the time off that is often associated and warranted with mental health conditions, just 36% of all workers have disability insurance that covers mental health conditions, with managers (41%) being slightly more likely than non-manager (34%) workers to claim that they have this type of coverage. However, a most astonishing statistic is that a majority (58%) of workers (51% of managers, 60% of non-managers) do not know if they have disability insurance that covers mental health conditions.

Workers Weigh in on Mental Health Issues...

It appears that only a small minority believes that individuals choose to be depressed (12%), and that people who are depressed could just snap out of it if they really wanted to (14%). On the flip side, an overwhelming majority (83%) believes that workers with mental health conditions can be just as productive as other workers if they have access to the right supports. Furthermore, a majority (57%) believes that, at their workplace, people can acknowledge that they have depression and still get ahead in their careers.

Seven in ten (69%) workers believe that if they told their direct supervisor that they suffered from depression they would be understanding and supportive. In fact, three quarters (76%) of workers believe that it is easier for workplaces to deal with physical disabilities than with mental health conditions. Perhaps in light of this, three in five (60%) suggest that there needs to be a way to verify that someone is actually suffering from depression before they are given any special consideration at work.



Continuing in a similar vein, eight in ten (77%) workers agree that since mental health conditions are not visible in the same way as some other disabilities, workers who need special accommodation as a result of their condition have a responsibility to self identify. This self identification seems to be important, in light of the fact that a slim majority (51%) would know what to do to help a co-worker who was suffering from depression. Their own inabilities to help notwithstanding, most (82%) workers believe that CEOs should make helping employees with depression a key human resources policy.

How Managers are Receiving and Dealing with the News...

Most managers who do know of their employee's condition are reportedly being notified by the employee him or herself whether it be accompanied with a doctor's note (44%) or without a note (35%). Just 6% report having heard the news through the grapevine, by management (5%), or the human resources department (3%).

But news of their employee's condition is not kept solely to that manager's knowledge, with the data revealing that in 48% of cases other coworkers were also made aware of the employee's condition. In less than four in ten (38%) cases was this not the case, with 14% of managers not knowing whether or not this occurred.

As a result of having depression, anxiety or stress, 76% of managers say that an employee has asked for time off, and 71% of managers indicated that an employee was in fact granted time off by the company for this reason. Similarly 48% of managers say that they have had a an employee ask for access to mental health counselling or other benefits, and 49% say that these services have been granted to an employee.

In four in ten (41%) instances, managers report that their employee has asked for a reduced workload, whereas 49% of managers indicate that their employee was granted this request by



their company. What is more, one third (33%) of managers say that their employee asked for changes to their job responsibilities, and in one third (32%) of cases was their employee granted their request by the company.

In the hopes that they might be able to improve the manner in which they manage situations of employees with mental illnesses, these are what managers believe would have made the experience of dealing with an employee who suffers from depression better or easier:

- Better training to deal with this type of situation (45%).
- More support from upper-level management (30%).
- Better guidelines and policies (30%).
- More support from the human resources department (28%).
- A more positive outcome from the employee (25%).
- More flexibility on part of the company (25%).
- More cooperation from the employee (24%).

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental health and sponsored by the Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace. The study was carried out between October 29th and November 6th, 2007 in Canada and involved a full/part-time worked sample of 4122 individuals (1223 managers and 2788 non-managers). The study was conducted using Ipsos Reid's online I-Say Panel. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 1.25 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population of workers in Canada been polled. The margin of



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error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure that the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian populations according to Census data.

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