

Mental Health in the workplace: Survey of Hong Kong employees

香港職場心理健康問題調查

2017



Introduction

Mental health in the workplace is an issue that is gaining increasing prominence. Recent evidence suggests that significant progress has been made in recent years in both the U.S. and the U.K. to address the issue of poor mental health in the workplace and provide a better working environment. However, within Hong Kong, the issue remains contentious and there is a lack of evidence on the experience of mental ill health at work.

The City Mental Health Alliance Hong Kong launched in 2017 and is a membership based organisation focused specifically on helping employers improve workplace mental health. To assess the nature of the problem and provide a benchmark for Hong Kong based employers, the CMHA HK, together with Oliver Wyman, launched its first mental health survey.

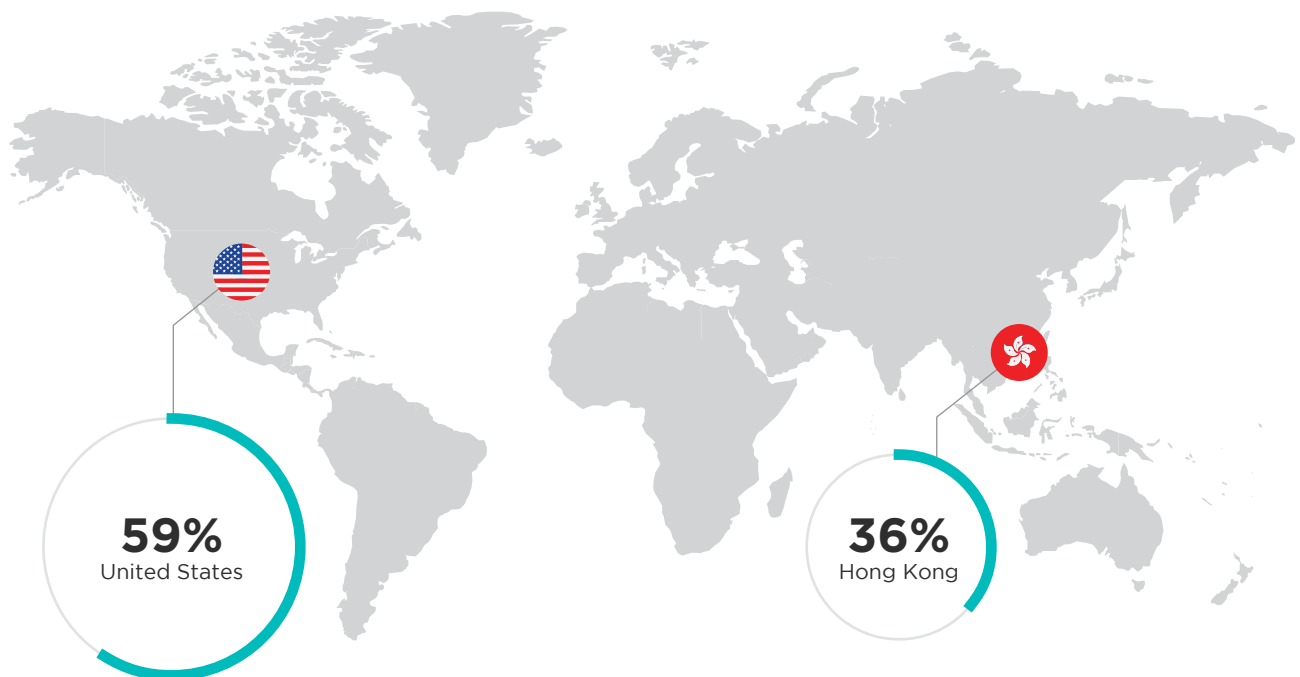
By the end of the survey period, we have received over 400 responses from employees working in industries that span across Legal, Financial Services and Consulting. In anticipation of future studies, we want to highlight the following two points to serve as a basis of comparison moving forward:

- Participation in this survey was voluntary
- Participation was limited to professional services firms in Hong Kong

Our survey results provide evidence of the underlying difficulties associated with talking about mental health within Hong Kong. In Hong Kong a lower percentage of survey respondents agreed that “people are generally caring and sympathetic to people with mental health problems”, compared to the same question in a US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) survey.

Perception on mental health problems in Hong Kong vs. the United States

To what extent do you agree “people are generally caring and sympathetic to people with mental health problems”?



Source US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012 **Figure 1**

Survey results

The survey results indicate that 35% of respondents have at any point in life experienced mental health problems while in employment, and 25% of respondents suffer from mental health problems while working for their current employer. This clearly highlights that mental health problems in professional services firms in Hong Kong are an issue.

70% of these employees that suffered from mental health problems would still go to work. Anecdotal evidence suggest that this is mainly driven by employees feeling:

- A sense of duty for not wanting to let the team down
- Unwillingness to discuss this with superiors as it could be seen as an act of weakness
- Requirement to be physically present at work (i.e. there is no policy that would support taking time off)

The impact is particularly striking for junior employees early in their career, and without proper remediation, this could lead to a deteriorating work-life balance, and may result in employees feeling trapped in a cycle of feeling depressed, restless and mentally drained.

Mental health problems survey results

35%
of respondents experienced **mental health problems**
while in employment



24%
of respondents experienced **mental health problems**
while for their current employer



Figure 2

Three major gaps

Through this survey, we have identified three gaps that are major inhibitors to employees in opening up about their mental health problems:

Knowledge gap

66% of survey respondents have never received any education on mental health problems or information related to mental health problems.

Firm support gap

Only 10% of people that have previously experienced mental health problems indicated that they think their firms have sufficient resources to support staff well being.

Trust gap

Only 30% of people with mental health problems open up to someone at work – this can be largely attributed to the negative stigma connected to mental health problems.

Majors gaps identified – knowledge, firm support and trust



Figure 3
* % of respondents that have ever experienced mental health problems

What can employers do to better support employees

As an employer, you may be asking yourself how this information can be helpful in taking meaningful action in your own workplace. Our survey has highlighted that there is a positive correlation between the knowledge about mental health problems vs. the confidence in talking to managers about mental health problems. Therefore improving knowledge about mental health could be a positive first step in encouraging employees to open up about mental health (Please see Figure 4).

In addition, firms can close the highlighted gaps by empowering employees with the appropriate knowledge, tools and resources, and leveraging that to accumulate the trust they need for opening up on their mental health problems.

Multiple initiatives were identified via the feedback of the respondents to this survey, and real changes can be brought about by prioritising and implementing them systematically.

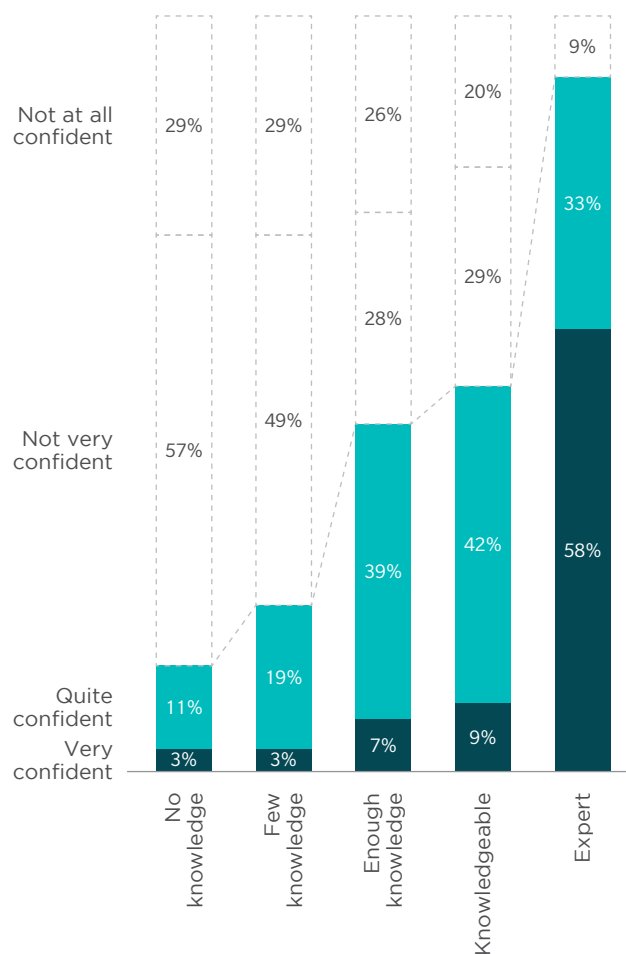
The following areas for improvement were mentioned multiple times by employees:

- Organise firm wide training sessions to provide the right tools and resources
- Seek third party resources to provide confidential counselling sessions
- Set culture from the top and drive an open dialogue for mental health problems

Creation of an open environment through which people can talk about mental health is crucial and employers and employees should be provided with the correct knowledge, language and support to enable this to happen. Cross-fertilisation of tools, sharing of best practice and working together will be important to address the issue of workplace mental health in Hong Kong.

Correlation between mental health knowledge vs. confidence in talking to your manager about mental health problems

How confident would you feel in talking to your manager about mental health problems?



How would you rate your knowledge about mental health problems?

Figure 4

背景

英美等地雖然近年來在職場上的心理健康問題上已經取得了很大的進展，但香港相對上仍然落後於其他先進國家。主要原因是社會對於相關的討論仍然是十分忌諱，而問題的嚴重性往往被低估。更甚的是香港至今仍缺乏可靠的數據來量化這個問題的規模和廣泛性，因此很難理解其根本原因。

City Mental Health Alliance (CMHA) 於二零一七年與奧緯諮詢合作推出首個職場心理健康調查。調查的主要目的是以數據為依據，藉此證明職場的心理健康是一個真正且有逼切性的問題。

通過這個調查，我們收到了來自法律，金融服務和諮詢行業的400多名員工的回复。為了將調查結果與未來的研究進行比較，我們需要強調兩點：

- 這項調查的參與是自願性質
- 調查對象僅限於香港的專業服務公司

我們的調查結果為社會的忌諱提供了實質的證據，因為調查對象中較低的百分比同意“人們普遍關心和同情有心理健康問題的人”。結果的評估還需要進一步考慮這個話題的忌諱，因為部分員工可能對心理健康問題還沒有清楚的認知。

香港和美國的心理康問題調查

你同意“人們普遍關心和同情有心理健康問題的人”？

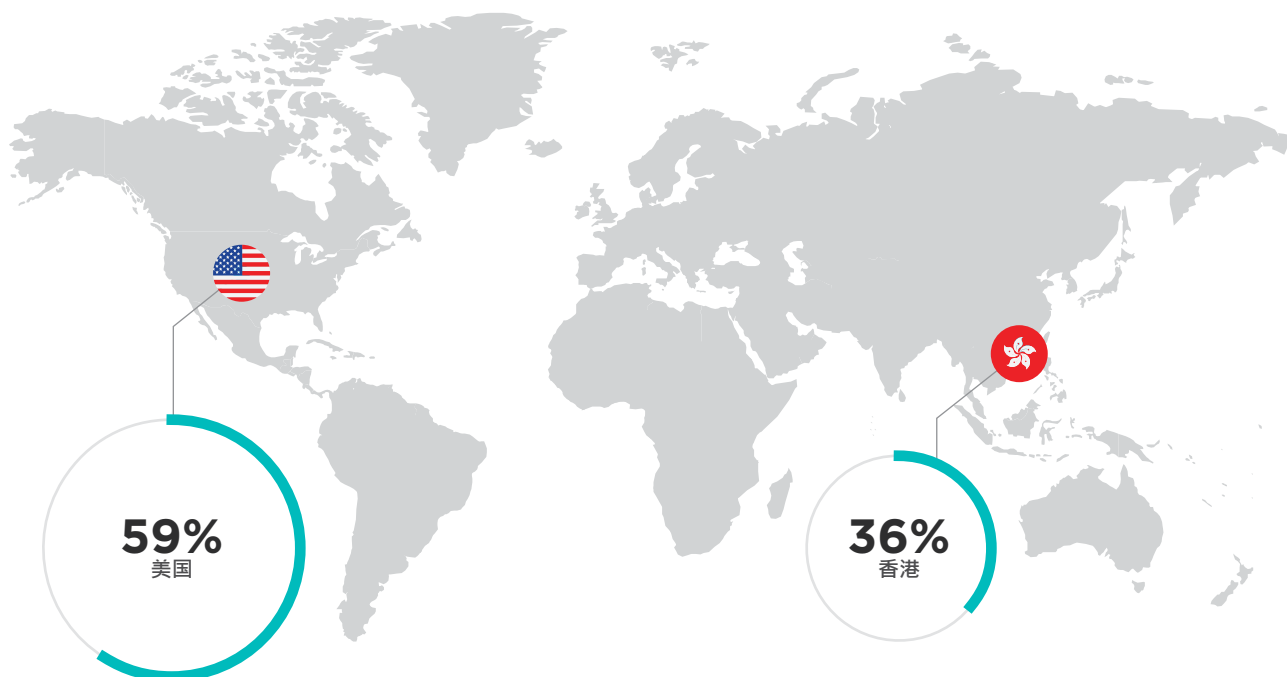


圖1
信息來源 US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012

調查結果

我們的調查結果顯示，35%的調查對象曾經有過心理健康問題，另外25%的調查對象更表示曾於現時的工作中有過心理健康問題。這證明香港專業服務公司員工的心理健康問題其他發達國家一樣普遍。

這些有心理健康問題的員工中，有70%仍然繼續上班，有證據表明這主要是由於員工感受到：

- 責任心以及不希望團隊失望
- 不願意與上級討論，因為這可能被視之為弱點
- 親自出席工作的要求（即沒有休假政策的支持）

而以上的問題對於剛入職的員工影響尤為明顯，如果不加以適當的處理，將會導致工作與生活的平衡惡化，最終陷入抑鬱，浮躁不安，心力交瘁的惡性循環。

心理健康問題調查結果

35%
的調查對象曾經有過心理健康問題



24%
的調查對象曾於現時的工作中有過心理健康問題



圖2

三大不足

通過這次調查，我們發現了三大主不足，成為了改善員工心理健康問題的主要障礙：

知識不足

66%的香港人從未接受任何關於心理健康問題相關的信息和教育。

雇主支援不足

曾有心理健康問題的員工當中只有10%認為雇主有足夠的資源來支持員工。

信任不足

只有30%患有心理健康問題的人會與同事表達他的情況——這可以主要歸咎於社會對於心理健康問題的忌諱。

三大不足——知識，雇主支援，信任



圖3

* %的受訪者曾經有過心理健康問題

雇主的支援

作為雇主，你可能有興趣該如何應對這種情況。我們的調查顯示，調查對象對於心理健康問題的知識往往與跟上級討論的信心成正比。因此我們認為提高員工的知識水平是促進更公開討論的第一步（請看圖4）。

此外，雇主可以通過向員工提供適當的工具和資源以彌補不足，從而協助解決他們的心理健康問題。

通過調查對象的意見，我們提出了以下的舉措。我們相信透過有計劃地優先並且實施可以帶來真正的改變，以下是員工曾多次提到的改進方法：

- 組織公司內部的培訓課程，提供正確的工具和資源
- 與第三方資源進行保密諮詢
- 從頂端推動文化鼓勵心理健康問題的公開對話

通過建立一個跨公司的心理健康聯盟，我們可以促進行業間的慣例共享，並攜手解決香港心理健康這個緊迫問題。

心理健康問題的知識與跟上級討論的信心相關

你會如何評價你對心理健康問題的知識？

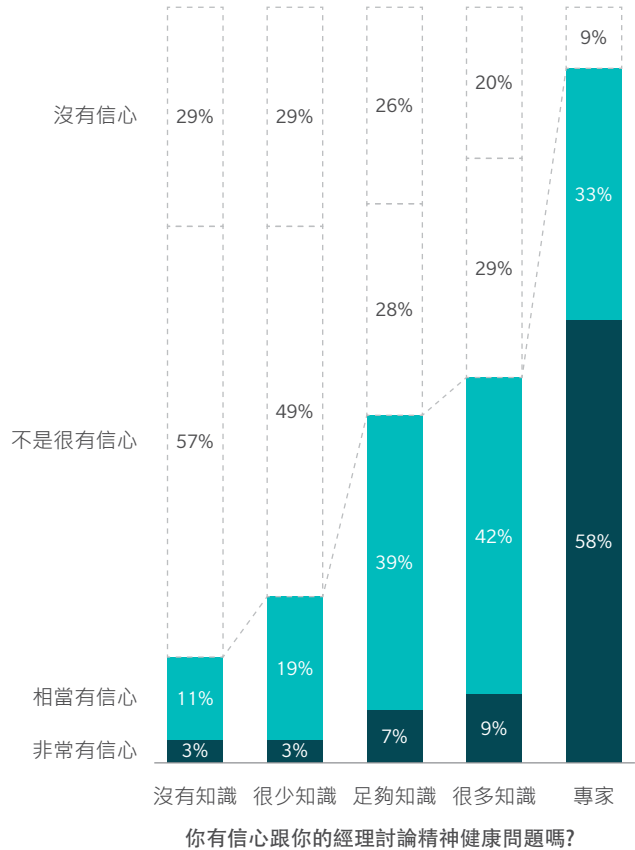


圖4

