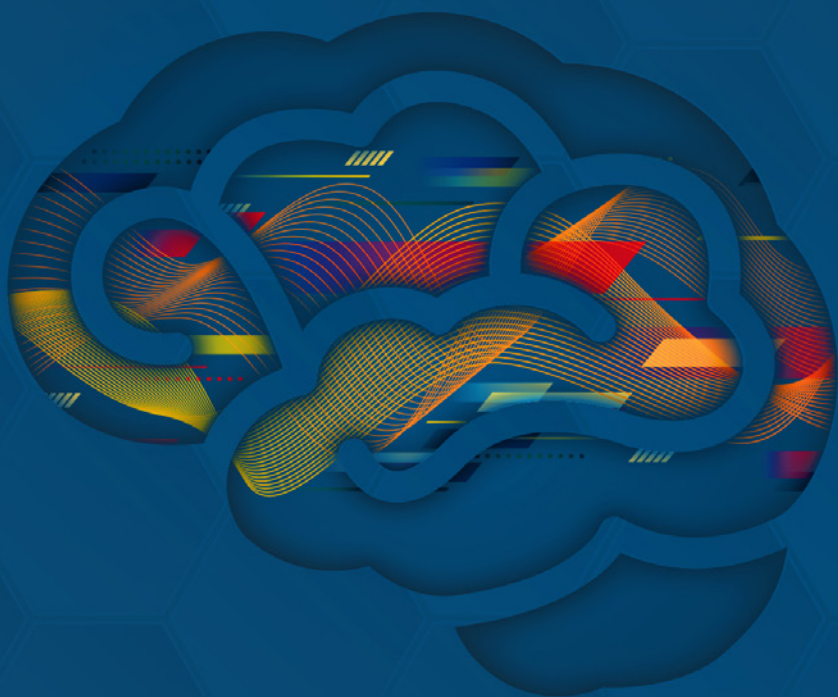


# PRCA APAC MENTAL HEALTH REPORT 2021



In partnership with:

**YouGov®**





# GET NOTICED.

**YouGov** Recommend Rankings 2021 reveals the most recommended brands by APAC consumers. Singapore Airlines tops the list in Singapore; Garuda Indonesia ranks first in Indonesia; Nike leads the rankings in Thailand; Netflix occupies the first spot in Hong Kong; and the top brand in Australia is Toyota.

Our media whitepaper investigates **what** kind of media subscriptions do Singaporeans pay for and finds that 43% have paid for **the** film/ TV subscription. Indians (27%) and Indonesians (26%) are more likely than the **world** (15%) to think celebrities are effective at promoting media & telecoms services. 1 in 7 consumers in Hong Kong (15%) and Singapore (14%) feel they are fully represented in adverts.

Want to know what the market **thinks** about your brand?

For more information, visit [business.yougov.com](https://business.yougov.com)

YouGov is a global provider of analysis and data generated by consumer panels in 55 markets. As the market research pioneer of Multilevel Regression with Poststratification (MRP) for accurate predictions at a granular level, our data consistently outperforms others on accuracy, as concluded by Pew Research. Combine that with our advanced analytical technology, powered by crunchio, and we are able to generate the most accurate, complete, and dynamic portrait of the world.

© 2021 YouGov PLC. All rights reserved | AD1021

**YouGov**

## YouGov Profiles

Our media planning and audience segmentation tool

Discover the power of building and customising a portrait of your consumers with unrivalled granularity:

**1 million+**  
data variables  
globally

**15 million+**  
registered panel  
members worldwide

**40+**  
markets covered

**With YouGov Profiles, you can:**

**Identify:** Combine unique variables and build any target audience segmentation.

**Understand:** Discover everything you need to know about your audience, including their demographics, media consumption, psychographics, social media engagement, lifestyle and habits, and many more.

**Target:** Unlock what strategy, media, comms or tactics will resonate.

Get to know more about your consumers now!  
Contact us at [ap.sales@yougov.com](mailto:ap.sales@yougov.com)

# CONTENTS

<b>WELCOME</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>SYMPTOMS, RISKS AND AWARENESS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SEEKING HELP (OR NOT)</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>19</b>

## METHODOLOGY

Between 21 July and 16 August, PRCA Asia Pacific worked with YouGov to survey PR and communications professionals across the Asia Pacific region. A total of 1,187 responses were received from practitioners in Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.

# WELCOME



**FRANCIS INGHAM MPRCA**  
Director General, PRCA

If you're reading this report, it probably means that you're interested in how to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the place where you work.

You're in good company: across the world, PR and communications leaders are increasingly recognising the importance of positive mental health in their organisations, their clients, their teams, and themselves. The PRCA has long been committed to supporting the industry in improving its mental wellbeing, and this commitment has only been strengthened by the COVID-19 pandemic and the strains it has put on all of us.

Looking through this report, it is clear that many Asia Pacific communications professionals already feel that their organisation provides a good level of support around mental health and wellbeing. But there is no room for complacency, especially when some findings point to women being less likely than men to feel that those measures are effective or relevant to them.

I'm very proud that PRCA members across the Asia Pacific region, and indeed around the world, are taking the issue of mental health seriously. I hope that this report will help even more of them to do exactly that.



**TARA MUNIS MPRCA**  
Head of PRCA Asia Pacific

Welcome to the first PRCA Asia Pacific Mental Health Report. It comes at a time of extra focus on mental health, with the COVID-19 pandemic posing huge personal and professional challenges to PR and communications practitioners across the world.

The PR profession has been, as ever, resourceful and resilient in the face of the huge professional and personal challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. But that resourcefulness and resilience has its limits. This report shows that nearly half (48%) of respondents say they are going through a particularly stressful period in their lives, and that nearly all (92%) have experienced some changes or difficulties affecting their mental wellbeing as a result of the pandemic. It is also worrying to see that some respondents struggle to find time to do things – like exercise, eating healthily or spend enough time with their loved ones – which can help build positive mental wellbeing.

Mental health is a very important issue for the PRCA – and indeed the PR and communications world as a whole – and we're delighted to be continuing the conversation through this report.



# SYMPTOMS, RISKS AND AWARENESS

Asia Pacific PR practitioners are in no doubt that mental health and wellbeing is an important issue – and the majority agree that the workplace has an impact on their mental state.

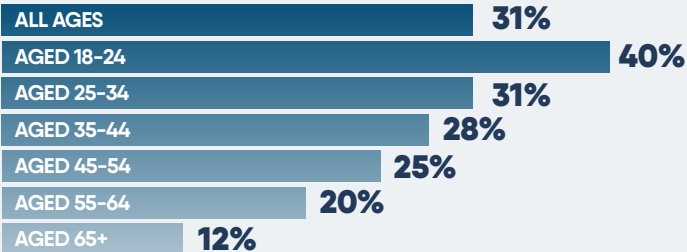
The vast majority of respondents agree that mental health and wellbeing was either ‘very important’ (75%) or ‘somewhat important’ (18%) to overall quality of life, with 5% saying ‘neither important nor unimportant’ and very few calling it ‘not very important’ (1%) or ‘not important at all’ (1%). Women (80%) are more likely than men (71%) to select ‘very important’.

The survey also finds that a third (31%) of respondents have suffered from a mental illness before – a number that is higher in younger age groups, and among men (33%, versus 29% for women).

## HOW MUCH INFLUENCE DO YOU THINK YOUR WORKPLACE HAS ON YOUR OVERALL MENTAL HEALTH?



## I HAVE SUFFERED FROM A MENTAL ILLNESS BEFORE

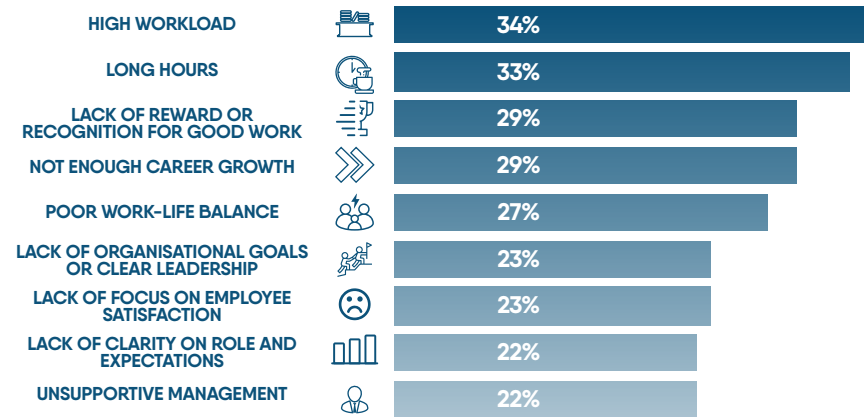


We asked respondents whether they faced certain potential triggers of poor mental wellbeing at work. High workload is the most common, followed by long hours.

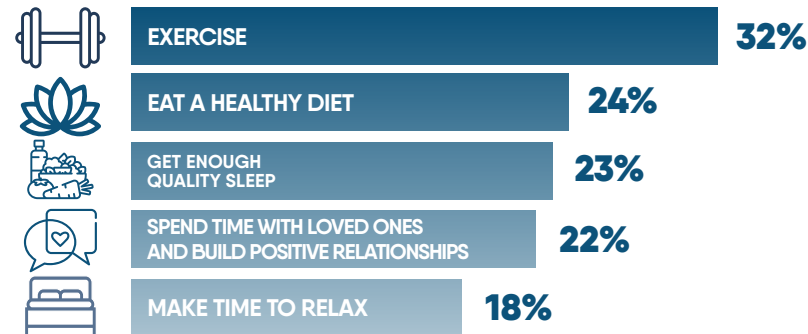
There is little gender split in answers to this question, with the top five the same for both men and women, but there is some variation based on age. Overall, 11% of respondents say they have not experienced any of the issues mentioned. For those aged 18-24 and 25-34, the figure is lower (8%). It rises to 13% for those aged 35-44; 11% among 45-54s; 16% among 55-64s; and 38% among those aged 65+.

PRCA Asia Pacific's most recent Census shows practitioners on average work the equivalent of an extra day each week, versus their contracted hours. This appears to be having a knock-on effect, with many practitioners struggling to do things that can be conducive to positive physical and mental health. In particular, women are more likely than men to struggle to find time to exercise, while men are more prone to a poor diet.

## MENTAL HEALTH TRIGGERS FACED BY RESPONDENTS AT WORK



## I NEVER, OR RARELY...



Those long hours, combined with the COVID-19 pandemic, are a potent mix. Nearly half (48%) of survey respondents report that they are going through a particularly stressful period in their life, with 45% disagreeing, and 7% choosing not to answer that question. This rises to 54% for those aged under 25. It will be interesting to see whether this figure decreases in future surveys, as the post-pandemic normality emerges.

It is also worrying to see that in the last 12 months, many of the region's PR professionals have had trouble with sleep, anxiety, feelings of social disconnection or similar. Many of these have affected women more than men – alcohol or drug abuse is the only issue more common among male respondents.

## MENTAL WELLBEING ISSUES EXPERIENCED



## IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS I HAVE EXPERIENCED...

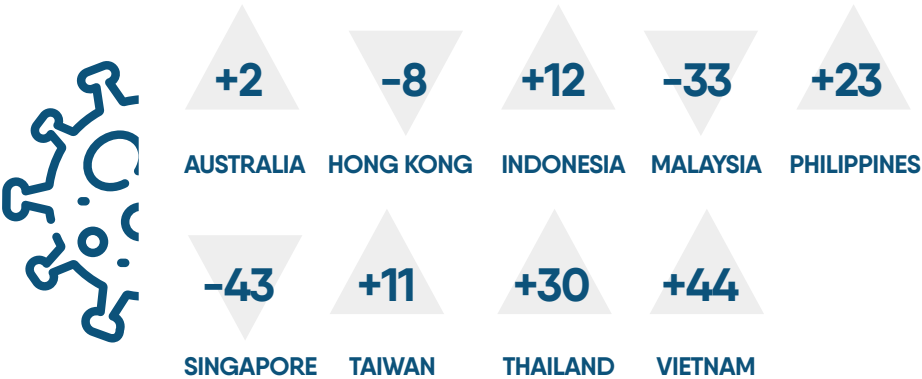
	WOMEN	MEN
LOSS OF INTEREST IN ACTIVITIES OR SOCIAL INTERACTIONS	39%	27%
FEELING DISCONNECTED	38%	30%
SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN SLEEP SCHEDULE OR APPETITE	37%	28%
EXCESSIVE FEAR, WORRY OR ANXIETY	36%	27%
SELF-HARM	11%	11%
ALCOHOL OR DRUG ABUSE	8%	13%

Overall, 12% of the region's PR professionals have had COVID-19 – a figure that more than doubles in Indonesia (18%) and Thailand (21%), but drops in Australia (9%), Hong Kong (6%) and Singapore (5%). Tragically, 16% of respondents have lost someone to the virus.

Surprisingly, more respondents (39%) say the pandemic has improved their mental health than say it has worsened it (35%). However, there are significant variations between countries.

Despite some people reporting improvements – perhaps the result of home working and no commuting – the pandemic continues to impact many practitioners' lifestyles and mental wellbeing. Only 8% say they have not made any changes as a result of the pandemic.

## HOW HAS COVID-19 AFFECTED YOUR MENTAL HEALTH? (BALANCE OF RESPONDENTS SAYING 'IMPROVED IT' MINUS THOSE SAYING 'WORSENERD IT')



## CHANGES AND DIFFICULTIES RELATED TO COVID-19

- Change in working environment (home, remote, etc.) 41%
- Feelings of isolation due to social-distancing and lockdown 36%
- Stress of exposure to COVID-19 33%
- Concern over high-risk loved ones contracting COVID-19 32%
- Change in job, role or work hours 31%

# THE SOOTHE

**Bold, inclusive and honest – The Soothe is your holistic resource for wellbeing your way.**

The Soothe is a wellness-centric digital media company that aims to create a new benchmark for bold, inclusive, and honest content that empowers people to take control of their approach to living well.

Based in Singapore and writing for Southeast Asia — home to diverse ethnicities, cultures and lifestyles —

The Soothe is an everyday, informative resource, sharing traditional and contemporary solutions, salves, and sagacity to make life sweeter. We believe that we're all on our individual journeys, together.

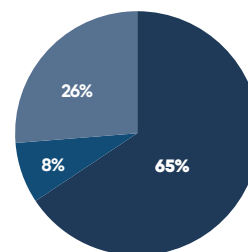
Visit us at [www.thesoothe.co](http://www.thesoothe.co)

Follow us on IG at [@the\\_soothe](https://www.instagram.com/the_soothe)

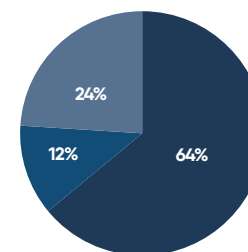
## SEEKING HELP (OR NOT)

Our research shows that the majority of the region's PR professionals are confident that they can identify mental health issues, and are comfortable talking to colleagues about such problems.

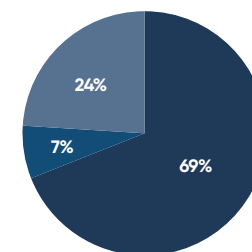
Overall, 62% agree that they are 'very well-informed and educated about mental health' – another 10% disagree, and the remainder are unsure. In response to other questions, a majority of respondents again demonstrated confidence in their ability to respond to mental health challenges – but this does leave a sizable minority feeling less confident, or unsure.



I FEEL CONFIDENT I CAN NOTICE SIGNS OR SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN MYSELF AND IN OTHERS



I KNOW WHERE TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS



I AM WILLING TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP FOR ANY MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS I MAY FACE

I AGREE I DISAGREE NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE

## HOW COMFORTABLE WOULD YOU BE IF...

...a co-worker spoke to you about it?

Comfortable: 88% | Uncomfortable: 12%

...a co-worker took some time off to deal with mental health problems?

Comfortable: 87% | Uncomfortable: 13%

...a co-worker's deadlines/targets were eased to help them deal with it?

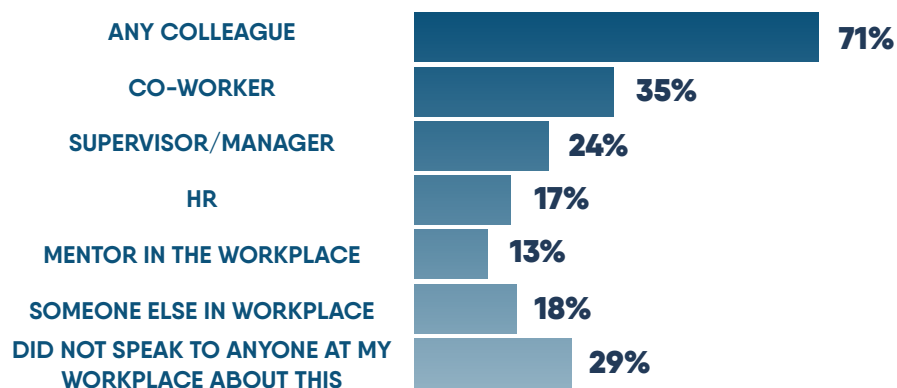
Comfortable: 87% | Uncomfortable: 13%

Our data reveals that the majority of people (71%) who had faced a mental health issue in the past year, had discussed this with one or more colleagues. There is some gender split, with that number rising to 77% of men and dropping to 66% of women.

People in younger age groups are more likely to have spoken about their mental state to someone at work – the figure is above 70% for all age groups under 45; 69% for those aged 45–54; and 53% among both those aged 55–64, and 65+.

Happily, a large majority of people discussing mental health issues with a colleague (86%) say they were satisfied with their colleagues' reaction and response.

## YOU FACED A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS – DID YOU SPEAK TO ANYONE AT WORK ABOUT IT?



## ...AND HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU WITH THEIR REACTION AND RESPONSE?

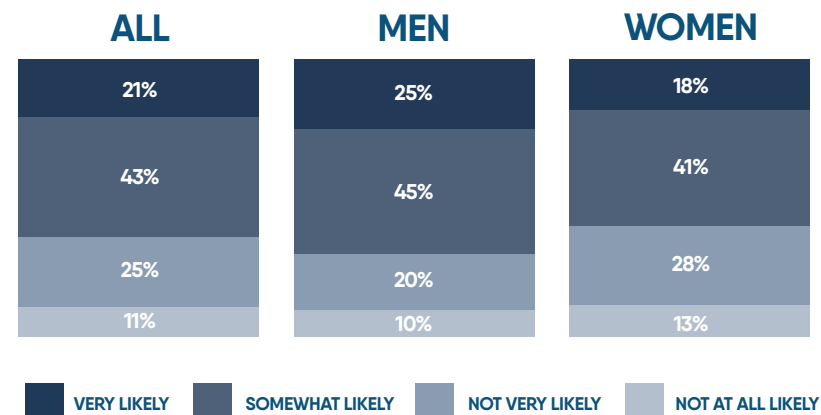
Very satisfied **31%**  
 Somewhat satisfied **55%**  
 Not very satisfied **13%**  
 Not at all satisfied **1%**



Our data shows that the majority of respondents (64%) would be likely to talk to a colleague if they were faced with a mental health issue in the future. This figure drops to 59% among women, and there are only slight difference between age groups.

There are several reasons given by those who say they would not speak to a colleague. There are some variations based on company size – people working at larger companies are more likely to be worried that having such a discussion might be inappropriate, or have negative impacts on their career.

## IF YOU WERE FACED WITH A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM IN FUTURE, HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO TALK TO SOMEONE AT YOUR WORKPLACE ABOUT IT?



## REASONS FOR NOT SPEAKING TO SOMEONE AT WORK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

It is a private issue and I would not wish to discuss it with anyone **45%**  
 I do not think it would make any difference if I talked to them **39%**  
 I do not think it would be appropriate to discuss such problems at work **37%**  
 There is no one at my workplace with whom I would feel comfortable talking about it **35%**  
 I do not think they would be able to understand my problems **35%**  
 I would be worried that it could have a negative impact on my career **34%**  
 I would not want them to think less of me due to these issues **27%**



However, the study also shows that just because many people know what they 'should' do if experiencing mental health issue, it's not always that way in practice.

For example, respondents were asked what someone should do if they experience feelings of extreme highs and lows. Nearly half (48%) suggested seeing a mental health professional – but in reality, only 24% of people who had experienced that in the last 12 months did see a practitioner.

A similar pattern is repeated with other issues – 60% of respondents say you should seek that support if you suffer with self-harm, while 3% think no action is needed. In reality though, only 33% of people who suffered with self-harm last year saw a mental health professional, and 11% took no action. Another example of this disconnect is shown below – it also illustrates that outside of colleagues and health professionals, many people seek help online, or from friends, family or a religious authority.

It is concerning that inaction is often cited as a way to deal with mental health issues – 3% of respondents said someone experiencing suicidal thoughts should take no action, and 13% said that person selected 'deal with it on their own'.

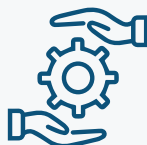
## HOW SOMEONE SHOULD DEAL WITH EXCESSIVE FEAR, WORRY OR ANXIETY...

No action needed **4%**  
Deal with it on their own **19%**  
Seek support online **26%**  
Talk to family/friends **52%**  
Talk to a religious authority **19%**  
Talk to someone at work **28%**  
See a doctor **37%**  
See a mental health professional **48%**



## ...AND WHAT PEOPLE DID IN PRACTICE WHEN THEY EXPERIENCED THIS

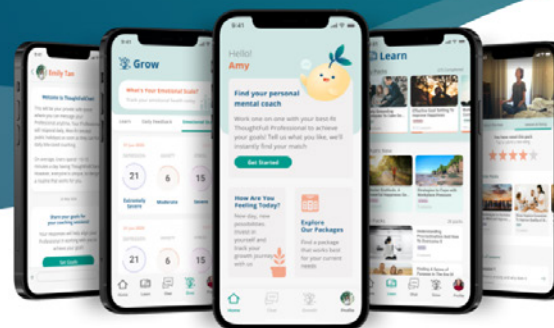
Did not take any action **8%**  
Dealt with it on my own **52%**  
Looked for support online **24%**  
Talked to family/friends **50%**  
Talked to a religious authority **15%**  
Talked to someone at work **22%**  
Met a doctor/ general practitioner **22%**  
Met a mental health practitioner **24%**



# YOUR EMPLOYEES' MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

**WHEN YOU DON'T CARE**  
**64** Working days lost yearly due to absenteeism and presenteeism

**WHEN YOU CARE**  
**4x** Return in productivity for every USD1 invested in mental health



SEAMLESS & AFFORDABLE  
**END-TO-END MENTAL HEALTH SOLUTIONS**

Care for everyone's growth journey:

### PREVENTIVE

Daily bite-sized coaching & self-assessment tools

### CURATIVE

1-on-1 counselling with certified professionals

### CRISIS

24-hr round-the-clock psychological first aid

**CONTACT US FOR A FREE NEEDS ANALYSIS**

Thoughtfully providing services that are:

**EFFECTIVE**  
**p<0.05**  
Statistically proven to reduce depression, stress and anxiety

**AFFORDABLE**  
**60%**  
Savings

**ACCESSIBLE**  
**80%**  
First-time engaging with mental health

**ENGAGING**  
**~20%**  
Utilization rate (vs. 1-3% traditional EAP)



# ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

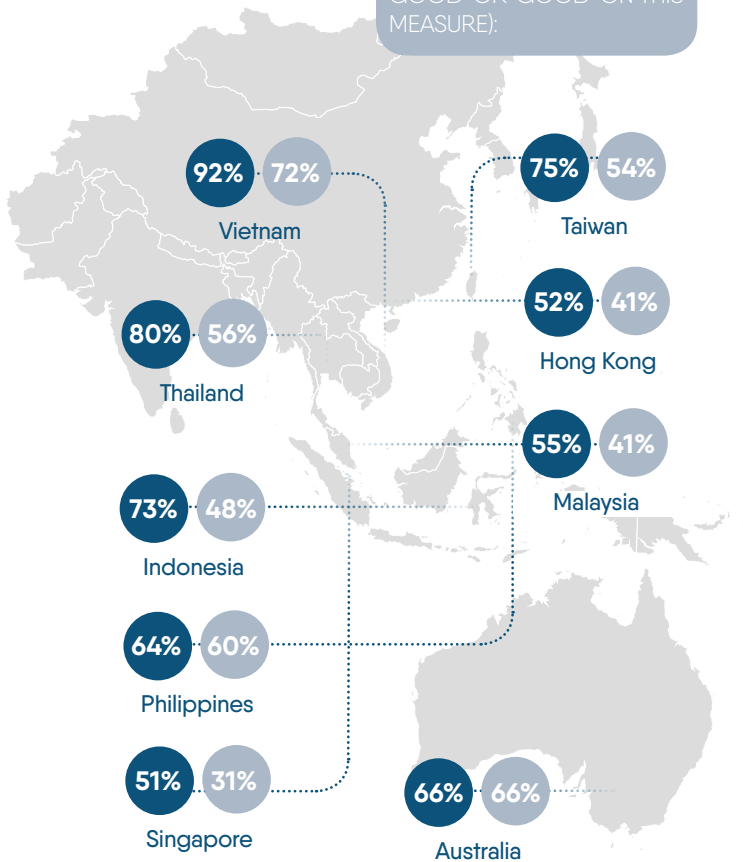
Surprisingly, many employers (32%) have not communicated with staff around mental health during the last year, our respondents say – but the majority (68%) have. That figure changes significantly from country to country.

Strikingly, 73% of men said they had heard a communication about this in their workplace, compared with 63% of women, suggesting these internal communications are not always effective.

While a narrow majority (52%) of respondents overall rated their employer as ‘very good’ or ‘good’ at providing mental health resources, this figure again varies in different markets.

**THERE HAS BEEN COMMUNICATION AROUND MENTAL HEALTH IN MY WORKPLACE IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS**

**MY EMPLOYER PROVIDES RESOURCES TO EMPLOYEES FOR TACKLING MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES**  
(PERCENTAGE RATING THEIR EMPLOYER AS ‘VERY GOOD’ OR ‘GOOD’ ON THIS MEASURE):



Overall, the region’s PR and communications professionals are positive about their employers’ work both on general company culture, and specific mental health-related measures. However, women are less likely to be as positive towards their employers than men, overall.

When it comes to which mental health-related benefits they offer, larger companies are slightly more likely than smaller firms to provide this support. The majority (83%) of companies offer at least one type of support – a number rising to 96% in Vietnam but dropping to 75% in Malaysia and Singapore.

## HOW DO YOU RATE YOUR EMPLOYER ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURES?

(Balance of respondents saying ‘very good’ or ‘good’ minus those saying ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’.)

COMMUNICATING ORGANISATIONAL VALUES OF RESPECT, CIVILITY AND EMPATHY	+48%
PROMOTING SOCIAL CONNECTION AT THE WORKPLACE	+46%
MAKING ALL EMPLOYEES FEEL RECOGNISED AND VALUED	+44%
FOSTERING A CULTURE WHERE MENTAL HEALTH IS TREATED ON PAR WITH ANY OTHER HEALTH PROBLEMS	+39%
PRIORITISING MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF EMPLOYEES	+37%
PROVIDING RESOURCES TO EMPLOYEES TO TACKLE MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES	+35%

## WHAT DOES YOUR COMPANY OFFER TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH?

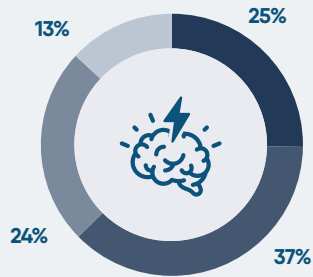


Across the region, 63% of respondents say they feel ‘completely’ or ‘moderately’ supported by their organisation around mental health. That figure changes little across different age groups, nor does it differ much between companies of different sizes.

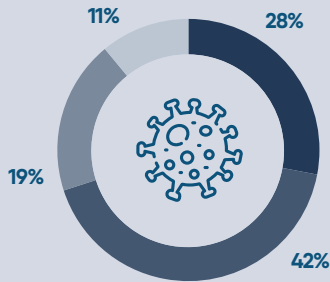
However, it does vary based on gender, rising to 69% for men and dropped to 57%, and goes below 50% in Hong Kong (49%) and Singapore (43%), but approaches three-quarters in Australia (73%) and Vietnam (74%).

Overall, respondents also agree that their organisations have been supportive during the pandemic. But a sizable number (40%) say they are not doing enough overall to support mental health – so there is no room for complacency.

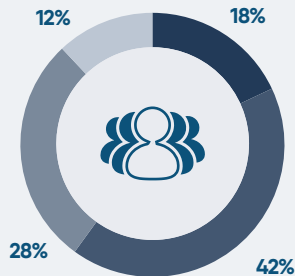
HOW SUPPORTED DO YOU FEEL BY YOUR ORGANISATION WITH RESPECT TO YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?



DURING COVID-19, HOW SUPPORTIVE HAS YOUR ORGANISATION BEEN WITH RESPECT TO MENTAL HEALTH?



OVERALL, DO YOU THINK YOUR ORGANISATION IS DOING ENOUGH TO SUPPORT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF THEIR EMPLOYEES?



CONCLUSIONS



LYNDA WILLIAMS  
Co-Founder of The Soothe

Now more than ever, mental health has to be taken seriously both at home and at work. Awareness is key and communicating ways to approach mental health can be done so in a variety of ways. This can range from weekly team meetings, staff intranets, one-on-ones, monthly wellness workshops and or just basic communication that there is an open door policy between employees and employers that it's okay to speak up if you are suffering. Participating in or encouraging activities that support mental health within the workplace are important, especially when we are in and out of work-from-home, not taking holidays as there's nowhere to go and suffering from mental fatigue. This can be anything from getting out of the house for a walk in nature, online team activities to connect, having mental health experts available to speak to, right down to basic things such as understanding each individual's unique situation and just asking how they are – one size does not fit all. From working mums who simultaneously have to homeschool and work, graduates whose first job out of college starts working from a packed household, to business executives who have pressure to bring in revenue in an unpredictable market – every person's situation is different and needs a bespoke approach.

Business owners and managers also need some form of training or awareness in terms of how to manage situations when staff have mental health problems and steps to take to allow employees to a) feel comfortable speaking up and b) how to best manage their needs. Singapore still has a long way to go compared to the West when it comes to normalising talking about mental health. This in itself needs to be talked about and made the norm, that essentially it's okay, if you aren't feeling okay – we are only human.



**JOAN LOW**  
Founder and CEO, Thoughtful

#### The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental

health is complex, diverse and wide ranging – affecting all parts of societies and populations. The findings of this report on the psychological impact that the pandemic has had within the PR and communications community is reflective of what we are seeing in our experience of delivering employee wellbeing services across different industries within Southeast Asia.

It is clear that a large majority of the respondents (75%) believe mental health to be integral to their overall quality of life and that their workplace has a moderate to high influence (80%) on their mental health. This shows a strong need for employers to put in place the right resources to support their employees' wellbeing.

It is important to keep in mind that while a population might have shared experiences of mental health challenges, each individual's mental health journey is unique. This is shown in the different triggers and ways of coping reported by the respondents. This is why employers must put the employee at the center of the experience when deploying an employee wellbeing program. There is no one-size-fits all solution. For an employee wellbeing program to be successful, it needs to be personalised, covering the end-to-end spectrum of mental health care from

preventive to crisis management.

What is also interesting is that a significant portion of respondents are not likely to speak to someone at work about their mental health problems. Based on our experience working with organisations across SEA, this is largely due to stigma that is still prevalent in this region. Employers need to take an active step in cultivating a safe and open culture within their organisation that promotes mental wellbeing and providing resources that are discrete and accessible to their employees.

It is encouraging to see that most of the respondents agree that their organisations have been supportive during the pandemic. However, we would like to highlight that this is only the beginning. Starting the conversation is the first step to sustaining, nurturing, and building the necessary mental health infrastructure within organizations to ensure continued support for all employees over time.

To take lessons learned from history, The National Centre for Biotechnology Information declared the outbreak of SARS as a mental health catastrophe where PTSD and depressive disorders lasted for up to 10 years post-pandemic. So now that we have taken the first step, let us walk the thousand miles together to ensure that proactive engagement with our mental health continues to be on the agenda beyond World Mental Health Day, and certainly beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.



**LEE NUGENT CMPRCA**  
Outgoing chair, PRCA SEA and Regional Director (APAC), Archetype

This first edition of the PRCA Asia Pacific Mental Health Report tells us that, inside our profession at least, mental wellness is increasingly being recognised as a wellbeing issue. In the past, it was perhaps misunderstood, ignored or – worse still – swept away as something that is private to each individual affected. Thankfully, this is changing and if there's one positive that comes from the horror that has been the COVID-19 pandemic, then it's that the PR and communications profession in APAC and elsewhere can (and must) no longer ignore the impact that a poor working environment can have on mental wellness.

But there's a long way to go. While the vast majority (80%) of professionals surveyed agree that the workplace has an impact on mental health, many of those experiencing problems elected to deal with the issue alone. One might conclude that this is because many organisations in our sector, despite a clear need, have still not put in place a programme of workplace communications, resources and support for those who are struggling.

I was surprised by the finding that in Hong Kong (48%), Malaysia (45%) and Singapore (49%), almost half of respondents have had no communications from their employer about mental health, and in those locations less than half would regard their organisation as 'good or very good' when it comes for providing resources to help employees tackle mental health issues. In fact, in Singapore, this falls to just 31%.

Despite this worrying data, good progress has been made by some. Almost two-thirds of those surveyed across the region feel that their company 'completely' or 'moderately'

supports them when it comes to mental health – but there's clearly much still to do.

As employers, we can and must make changes. Providing information, support and resources is just one part. We also need to ensure that we're creating a workplace culture where it's ok for someone who needs help to say so. And then provide access to mental healthcare in the way that many of us already provide access to physical healthcare. The research suggests that around 29% of organisations currently offer their people access to initiatives such as EAP programmes that provide professional, expert help to those who need it. I'd like to see this figure climb rapidly in the coming months.

Just as importantly, it's our responsibility to also address those critical issues that, perhaps, sit at the heart of the problem. We owe it to our people to put actions in place to deal with endemic over-working, for example, and to address poor people management both where it exists inside our own organisations and in the client/agency dynamic.

I have much optimism that, in APAC, we will continue to see improvements. It's great that this first report provides a benchmark from which we can monitor progress. I look forward to next year's analysis and, in the meantime, will encourage all of us to keep taking positive steps forward to look out for, and look after, the mental wellbeing of our colleagues.



# ABOUT

## PRCA Asia Pacific

The PRCA was founded in London in 1969. It launched PRCA Asia Pacific in 2021, replacing PRCA Southeast Asia, which had been launched in 2018. The association's aim is to raise standards in PR and communications, providing members with industry data, facilitating the sharing of communications best practice, and creating networking opportunities.