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THE RESEARCH CONSULTANTS

NARRATIVE REPORT

WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE RISKS IN
THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

10TH SEPTEMBER 2024



NARRATIVE REPORT

PREPARED FOR: R;PPLE SUICIDE PREVENTION CHARITY

The research was conducted by Censuswide, among a sample of 2010 UK hospitality workers. The data was collected between 12.08.2024-19.08.2024. Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society and follows the MRS code of conduct and ESOMAR principles. Censuswide is also a member of the British Polling Council.

MENTAL WELLBEING AMONGST HOSPITALITY WORKERS

Almost 3 in 5 (59%¹) hospitality workers surveyed currently experience mental health conditions or have done previously whilst working in the sector and of these, over half (55%) have⁶ searched for harmful content online whilst they were in the workplace

Almost 3 in 5 (59%¹) hospitality workers surveyed currently experience mental health conditions or have done previously whilst working in the sector. Just over a third (34%) are currently experiencing these, whilst a quarter (25%) have done so previously. Porters (52%), bartenders (43%) and chefs (39%) surveyed are amongst the most likely job titles within the industry to be currently² experiencing mental health conditions. Younger workers (such as those aged 16-24) also seem to be more affected currently² than older workers (such as those aged 55+) (39% vs 22%).

For those who are or have currently experienced any mental health conditions, anxiety (55%), depression / low mood (48%) and panic attacks (29%) are the most common. Anxiety and depression / low mood are also the most common across job titles and age groups.

Concerningly, around half (51%¹) of hospitality workers have experienced negative or suicidal thoughts. In more detail, almost 3 in 10 (29%) have experienced negative thoughts, 1 in 12 (8%) have experienced suicidal thoughts and just over 1 in 8 (13%) have experienced both. Suicidal thoughts seem most prevalent with receptionist / front desk / front of house workers (25%³), waiters/waitresses (25%³) and bartenders (24%³) and amongst those aged 16-24 (30%³).

More generally, although over half (54%) of hospitality workers surveyed would rate their mental wellbeing as good⁴, under a quarter (22%) would self-assess it as very good. Moreover, almost a fifth (17%) would rate it as poor⁵. Across the jobs in the industry, bartenders (20%), waitresses/waiters (18%) and receptionist / front desk / front of house workers (18%) are most likely to rate their mental wellbeing as poor⁵. In addition, 16-24-year-olds in the industry are also most likely to rate it as poor⁵, whereas those aged 55+ are the least likely (26% vs 11%).

Shockingly, over half (55%) of respondents who are or have experienced mental health conditions whilst working in the sector, have⁶ searched for harmful content online whilst they were in the workplace, with almost a fifth (19%) having done so multiple times. Across the job roles, housekeepers/cleaners (67%), chefs (61%) and bartenders (60%) are the most likely to have searched for harmful content and those aged 35-44 (67%) are most likely across age groups. It's also notable that male hospitality workers are much more likely to have searched for harmful content than female hospitality workers (63% vs 44%).

Overall, there is a clear issue with mental wellness in the industry.

Notes:

¹All 'yes' answers combined.

²'Yes, currently only' and 'yes, currently and previously' answers combined.

³'Yes, suicidal thoughts' and 'Yes, both negative and suicidal thoughts' answers combined.

⁴'Very good' and 'quite good' answers combined.

⁵'Quite poor' and 'very poor' answers combined.



THE IMPACT OF JOBS ON MENTAL WELLBEING

High-stress environments (45%), low pay / financial wellbeing (42%), abuse from customers (39%) and unsociable/long working hours (37%) are the most common factors negatively affecting mental wellbeing

For those who rate their mental wellbeing as poor, their work and job seems to be a contributing factor. Indeed, two thirds (66%) of hospitality workers who rate their mental wellbeing as poor, say their work/job negatively¹ affects their mental wellbeing. In more context, under half (45%) of those with poor mental wellbeing said their personal life negatively¹ impacts their mental wellbeing, suggesting that it is, in fact, their work/job that is the main catalyst.

It's perhaps no surprise that work is having a negative effect on mental wellbeing as 7 in 10 (70%) hospitality workers surveyed find their job role stressful². Chefs (75%) and waitresses/waiters (74%) surveyed are most likely to find their job role stressful² across specific job titles, whilst those aged 16-24 (76%) are the most likely across age groups. Moreover, looking at the connection between stress of job roles and the impact on mental wellbeing, those who find their job role very stressful are much more likely than those who find their job role not at all stressful to say their work / job negatively¹ affects their mental well-being (43% vs 4%). This indicates a cycle of poor mental wellbeing, that might be difficult to break out from.

In terms of the aspects of the job that are having the most impact, high-stress environments (45%), low pay / financial wellbeing (42%), abuse from customers (39%) and unsociable/long working hours (37%) are the most common things negatively affecting the mental well-being of respondents.

Concern for colleagues

It's not just their own mental wellbeing that hospitality workers are contending with. In fact, just over 3 in 5 (61%) have³ felt concerned about a colleague's mental wellbeing whilst they have worked in hospitality. This remains high across specific roles in the industry (53%³-67%³) but is most common with those aged 25-34 (67%³) and least so with those aged 55+ (43%³). Male hospitality workers are also more likely than female hospitality workers to have felt concern about a colleague 65% vs 57%).

For those who have felt concern, almost half (48%) spoke to them and encouraged them to talk, whilst almost a third (32%) urged them to seek professional help (e.g. GP, Mental Health Nurse). It seems that respondents are less likely to have taken action into their own hands by alerting their manager/boss (28%) or contacting their friends/family (22%), whilst around a fifth (21%) said they kept an eye on them without confronting them.

Notes:

¹'Somewhat negatively affects this' and 'Significantly negatively affects this' answers combined.

²'Very stressful' and 'Somewhat stressful' answers combined.

³'Yes, only one colleague' and 'yes, more than one colleague' answers combined.

MENTAL WELLBEING SUPPORT FOR HOSPITALITY WORKERS

Almost 2 in 5 (38%) respondents who have experienced mental health conditions do not think there is enough support provided in the hospitality industry to support worker's mental wellbeing and almost half (48%) of those with poor mental wellbeing said the same

Although almost half (48%) of hospitality workers who have been concerned about a colleague's mental wellbeing spoke to them and encouraged them to talk, there seems to be some reluctance to share with co-workers. Indeed, only around a fifth (21%) of respondents feel comfortable talking to their colleagues about their mental wellbeing and this is even lower (10%) for those who rate their mental wellbeing as poor.

That said, over 7 in 10 (73%) of those who have experienced or are experiencing any mental health conditions have received help during a shift when they felt in a negative space, which is encouraging. Bartenders (87%) are most likely across specific job roles to have received help, whereas housekeepers/cleaners are the least likely (69%).



Another positive point is that just over 7 in 10 (71%) hospitality workers surveyed know where to access help and support for their mental wellbeing, although this decreases to 64% for those who would rate their mental wellbeing as poor.

There's room for improvement though, as just over a third (34%) of hospitality workers do not think there is enough support provided in the hospitality industry to support worker's mental wellbeing and a further 1 in 8 (12%) are not sure. This also increases for those with first-hand experience as almost 2 in 5 (38%) respondents who have experienced mental health conditions do not think there is enough support provided in the hospitality industry to support worker's mental wellbeing and almost half (48%) of those with poor mental wellbeing said the same.

In terms of what they think could help, the top ten ways respondents think employers in the hospitality industry could do more of to support worker's mental wellbeing are:

1. Financial security (e.g. better pay) (33%)
2. Offer more flexibility with working hours (30%)
3. Improved workplace culture (29%)
4. Employee benefits (e.g. Headspace Subscription, Discounted Gym Membership) (29%)
5. Job security (e.g. better contractual arrangements) (28%)
6. Frequent recognition and reward (27%)
7. Offer staff counselling sessions (25%)
8. Signpost to relevant mental health support channels (22%)
9. Implement more stringent wellbeing policies (22%)
10. Offer more staff social events/opportunities (22%)

This was followed by implementing an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) (20%) and less targets (16%).

Generally, it appears that more support is needed, and desired, to support the mental wellbeing of hospitality workers.

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