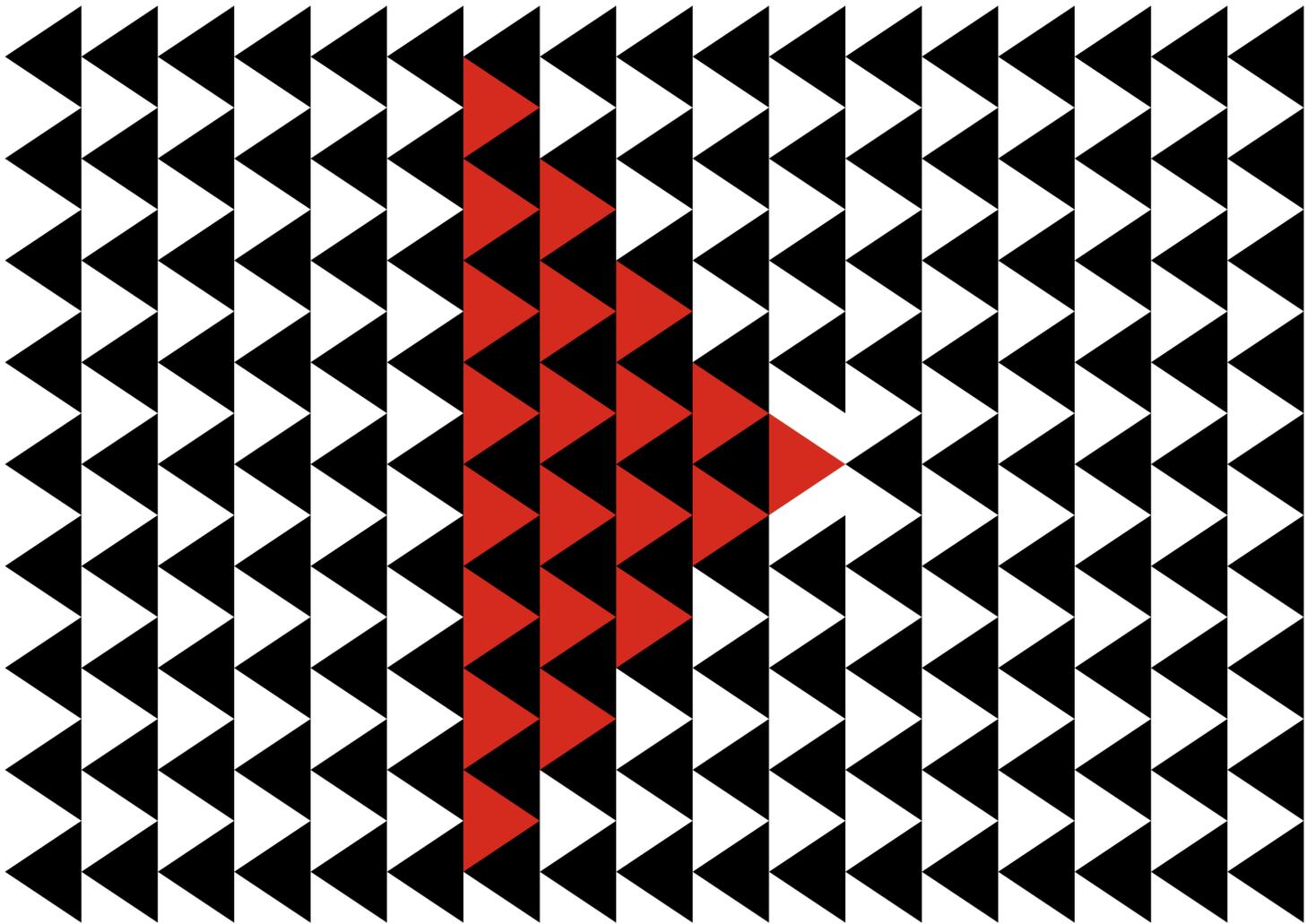


The Mental Health Matrix™

A next-generation approach for identifying and managing mental health in the workplace



MADE OF MILLIONS

verizon
media

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Introduction

Managers identify employee mental health as the most pressing issue facing their organizations, yet the vast majority of companies aren't addressing it.¹ Moved by the need to address mental health at scale, Verizon Media teamed up with nonprofit Made of Millions to conduct a global study among managers, human resource executives and company leaders on mental health in the workplace.

The result is **The Mental Health Matrix™—a new standard for identifying sources of mental strain and the tools required to combat them.**

Methodology → This study is based on a 2021 survey of 1,000 managers, human resource executives and corporate leaders in six global regions: Canada, France, India, Taiwan, the United Kingdom and the United States. Deeper conversations were conducted with an expert panel of 12 psychologists, psychiatrists and corporate leaders in mental health.

¹ Findings are based on a 1,000-person quantitative study among global managers who ranked "The mental health of employees" as the most important issue facing their organization today, surpassing 13 other workplace issues. Furthermore, 73% of these managers stated employee mental health was either not an active part of their company dialogue or that little to no action had been taken to address employee mental health.



Expert Panel



Dr. Brittany Linton Licensed Psychologist, Medical Advisor for Made of Millions



Bronwyn Ott North America Well-Being & Culture/Canada Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Leader, Unilever



Chivon John Global Wellness Specialist, Shopify



Clare Lin Senior Director, HRBP APAC, Verizon Media



Colin Minto Vice President, Talent Acquisition, Planning & Employer Brand, Europe, Middle East & Africa, Marriott International



Iván Markman Chief Business Officer, Verizon Media



Jackie Nith Ishibashi Global Well-Being Manager, Snap Inc.



Jo Lambert Head of Consumer Business, Verizon Media



Dr. Jody Adewale Psychologist, Medical Advisor for Made of Millions



Kristiana Carlet Stagno Vice President International Sales, Verizon Media



Dr. Neha Chaudhary Child & Adult Psychiatrist, Medical Advisor for Made of Millions



Paige Bellenbaum LMSW, Founding Director, The Motherhood Center

Executive Summary

→ Corporations are finding themselves on the frontlines of a burgeoning mental health crisis. After a year that has tested the world's mental wellness on a historic scale, companies now recognize that the need to address employee mental health outweighs the taboos and challenges that surround it.

→ There is a gap between recognizing mental health as a workplace issue and creating a company culture that effectively addresses it. And stigma is a big reason why. **The Mental Health Matrix™** aims to close that gap by creating a standard for defining different sources of mental strain and empowering managers to address them.

→ Beyond stigma, a lack of clear language to address mental health challenges and intersectional factors is a major roadblock for the movement. Providing language guidance is a crucial step in creating open dialogues between managers and their teams.

→ Additional roadblocks to workplace change include the sheer diversity of needs, frequent calls for top-down advocacy that don't address the full picture and an over emphasis on professional culture that dissuades people from seeking help.

→ A model for managing mental health in the workplace puts mental wellness on managers' radar, reduces "othering" and most importantly, shifts the script from diagnosing mental health conditions to empowering managers to take action.

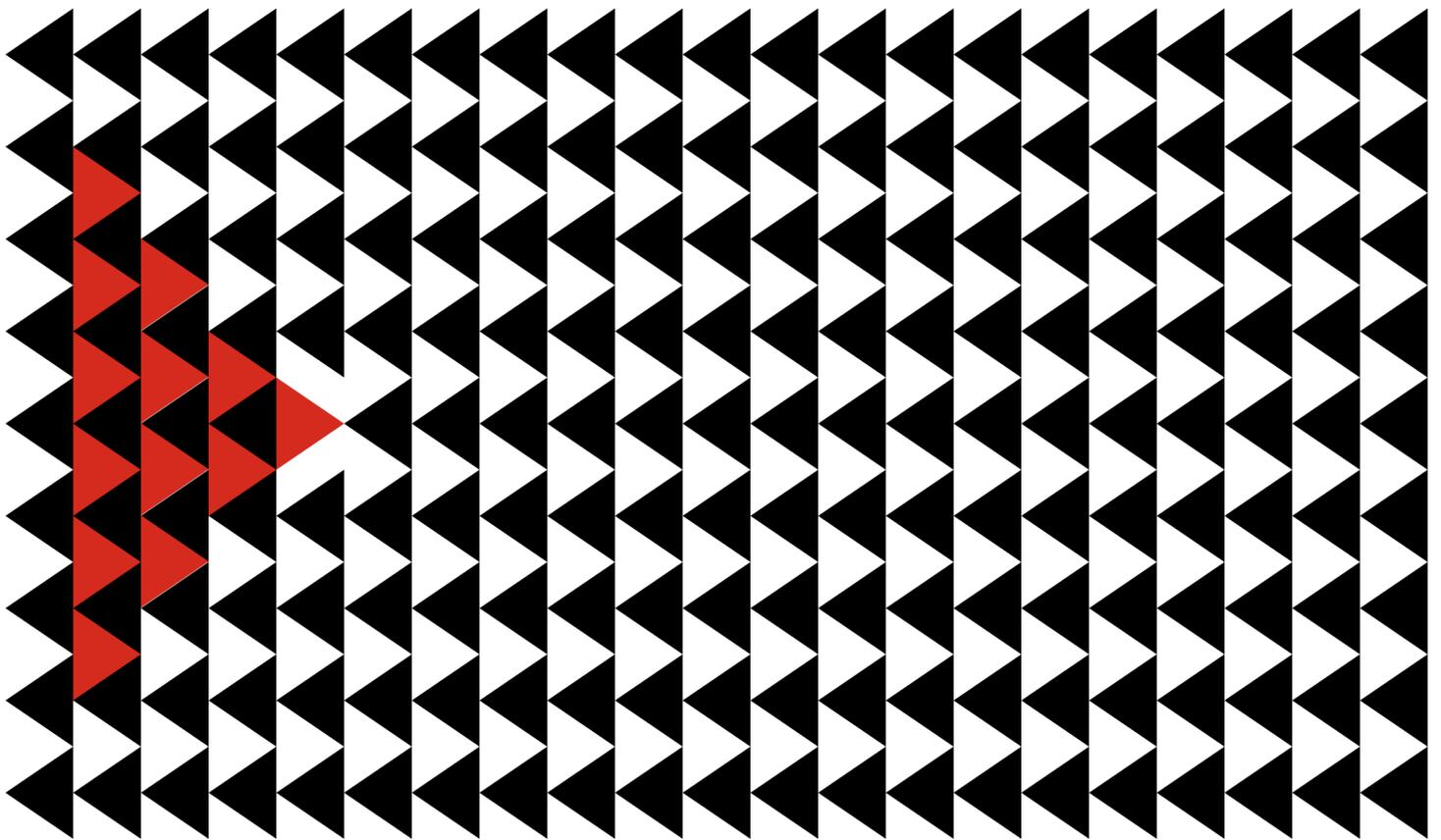
→ **The Mental Health Matrix™** maps a variety of mental health conditions, intersections, triggers, and situations on a quadrant model anchored in four key actions: accommodating neurodiversity, arbitrating discriminatory behavior, addressing workplace stressors, and adapting to personal struggles.

→ While mental health needs vary greatly by demographics and company size, three key challenges have emerged as time sensitive issues for most companies: employee burnout, intersectionality awareness, and caregiver stress.

→ By leveraging **The Mental Health Matrix™** to empower managers to address mental health, corporations can alleviate the bottleneck Human Resources is experiencing as executives face an onslaught of employee needs, especially during a time when HR may be on the brink themselves.

→ While leadership can create an empathetic company culture, messages about mental health can get lost in translation as they trickle down from the top. We all play a part in acting as translators, including managers diagnosed with mental health conditions and younger generations entering the workforce with increased awareness.

The Mental Health Zeitgeist

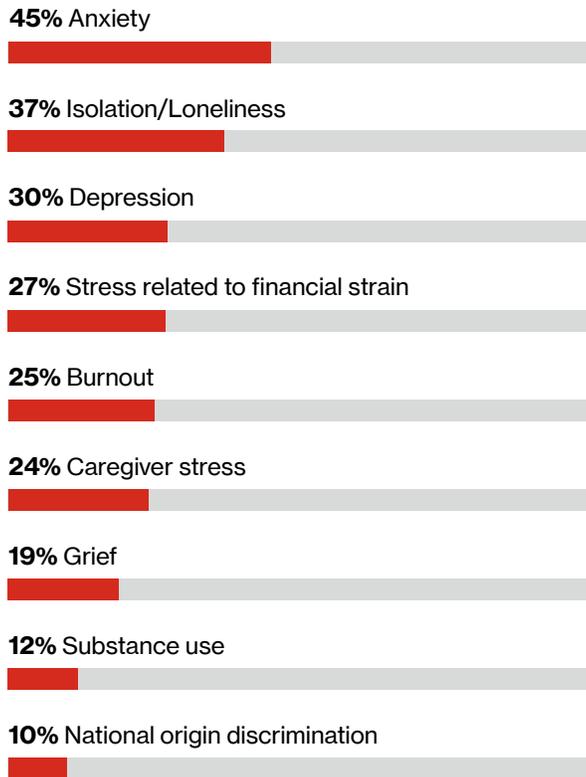


Corporations are finding themselves on the frontlines of a burgeoning mental health crisis. After a year that has tested the world's mental wellness on a historic scale, companies now recognize that the need to address employee mental health outweighs the taboos and challenges that surround it.

Mental health in the workplace has reached a zeitgeist moment. Work-from-home memes and jokes about Zoom etiquette have given way to the very real grief, burnout, loneliness, racial reckonings, and financial strain of the past year, adding new urgency to a mental health crisis that was burgeoning before 2020.

2020s Mental Health Toll By-the-Numbers

87% of global managers report they, or their team, have experienced at least one of the following mental health challenges directly due to the events of the past year:



Managers report that employee mental health is the number one issue their organizations face. It surpasses other key workplace issues, from productivity to Diversity & Inclusion. Three-quarters (76%) say they are actively worried about the mental health of someone on their team. “The events of the past year are impacting everybody—new moms, dads, kids, adolescents, you name it,” Paige Bellenbaum, LSMW and founding director of The Motherhood Center, told us. “Everybody is feeling the toll of what this has been like.” To this point, 87% of managers we surveyed say their team has felt the mental health strain of the past year (see side bar) and a full 74% have questioned their own mental health. Corporations are on the frontlines of managing this mental health crisis not only because work is one of the few consistent connection points people have had during a year of social distancing, but also because other resources are stretched. “Mental health practitioners are maxed out right now,” according to Bellenbaum.

Adding momentum to the mental health movement is Gen Z, the newest members and managers of the workforce, who have been staunch advocates of mental health since their teens. They are more likely than any other generation to agree that mental health is health (95% agree vs. 88% of other generations). Furthermore, they are more likely to have struggled at work because of their own mental health challenges: 39% have left a role in their career because the workplace environment wasn’t conducive to their mental wellness versus 30% of other generations, an eye-opening statistic considering Gen Z has had far fewer years of work under their belt. And while this statistic might be met with some disbelief from older generations, whose own early career struggles were likely met with a “toughen up” mentality...it’s Gen Z’s sensitivity to mental health that positions them to be catalysts for change. Disbelief or not, 87% percent of managers do agree that with this next generation comes a higher standard for mental health resources at work.



Managers in the U.K. are +52% more likely than those of other countries to name mental health as the most important issue in the workplace today.



Mental health impacts management turnover more in **Taiwan**, with managers **+22% more likely** than those in other countries to say they've left a role because it wasn't conducive to their mental health.

98%

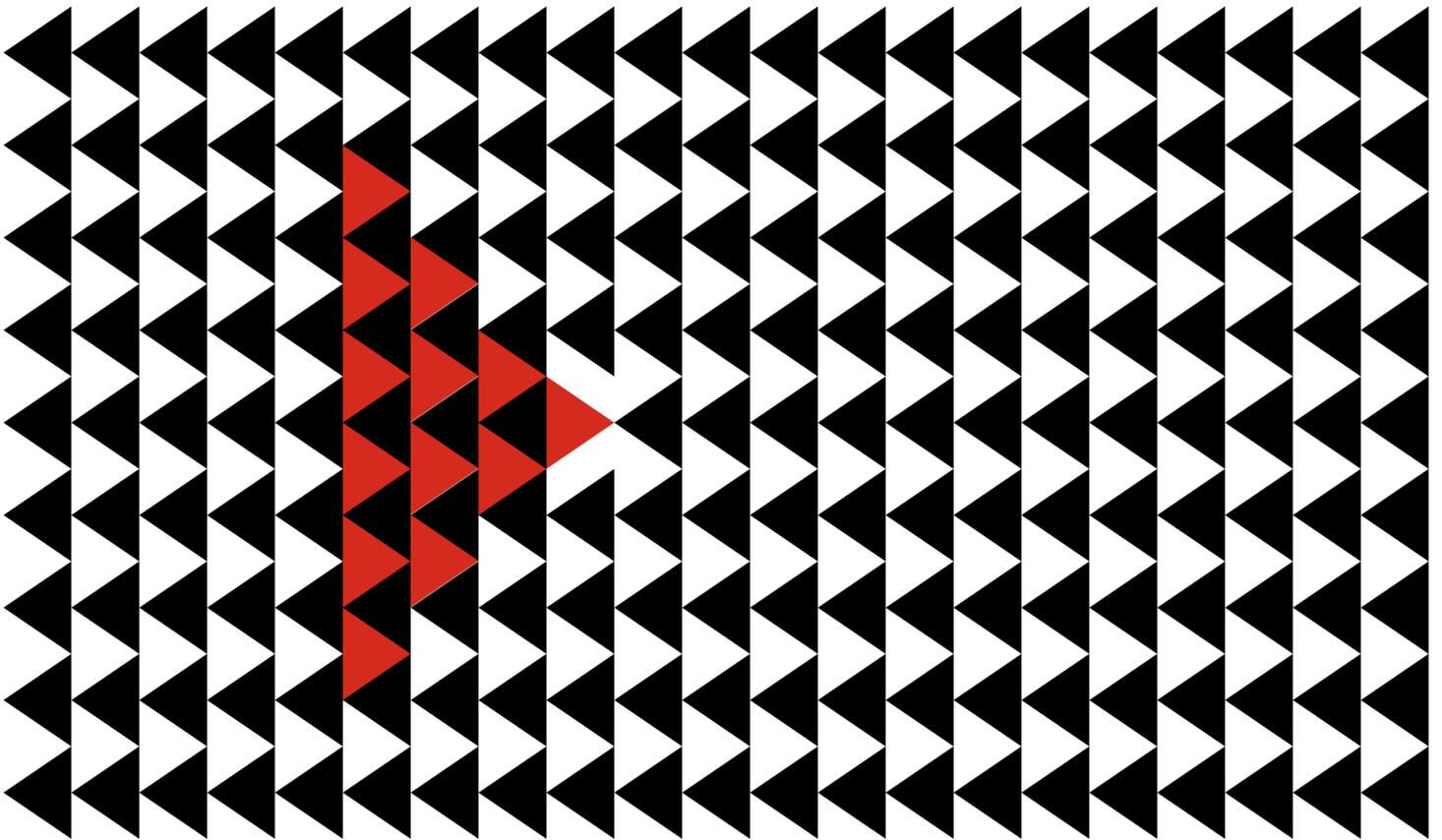
of managers agree (59%) or somewhat agree (34%) that employee mental health directly impacts their bottom line.

And then, of course, there is the well-documented economic case for why companies should care about mental wellness: it's good for business.

“Taking care of your employees’ mental health is good for the bottom line,” Jody Adewale, psychologist and Medical Advisor for mental health nonprofit Made of Millions, emphasized. “It’s good for business. It’s good for the economy.”

To Adewale’s point, managers we surveyed say the top reason for reduced productivity in the past year wasn’t budget cuts, project delays or remote work adjustments, but, instead, “The mental health of employees—people aren’t as focused or as inspired.” Linked to this lack of productivity is presenteeism, or employees showing up for work even though they’re mentally not there. When asked to choose, 66% of managers say that presenteeism is an even bigger issue in the workplace than is absenteeism (33%). All of this adds up to a tipping point for mental health in the workplace.

Awareness to Action



There is a gap between recognizing mental health as a workplace issue and creating a company culture that effectively addresses it. And stigma is a big reason why. The Mental Health Matrix™ aims to close that gap by creating a standard for defining different sources of mental strain and empowering managers to address them.

Despite this mental health zeitgeist, resources for managing employee mental health are largely non-existent. Fewer than one-third of managers feel well-equipped to handle the mental health issues they face at work and 30% worry that, without these resources, they run the risk of being “armchair psychologists,” potentially doing more harm than good.

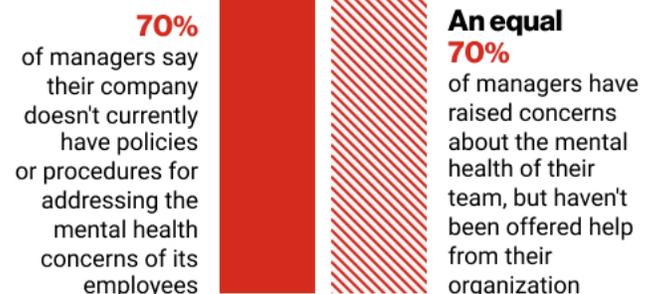
In a candid discussion with a partner at a venture capital firm who wished to remain anonymous, we heard that mental health had been repeatedly flagged as a serious issue at the firm and among the founders they finance, but no action had been taken. “If we acknowledge that mental health is a problem, then we have to deal with it,” she explained. “And we don’t have the resources to do that.”

But even among organizations that have the resources in place, company leaders say the uptake is slow. “We’ve moved beyond acknowledging that there are mental health issues among employees and we’ve made an effort to take the stigma away and create an open dialogue,” Jo Lambert, Head of Consumer Business at Verizon Media, told us. “Our focus now is to ensure we are offering the right tools – support that actually has teeth and can have a meaningful impact – to really support the mental health of everyone on the team.” Chivon John, Global Wellness Specialist at Shopify, agrees that having resources and using them are two different things. “I think there is sometimes hesitancy in people knowing ‘When is it time for me to ask for support?’, or feeling like, ‘Should I be asking for help?’” Neha Chaudhary, child and adult psychiatrist and Medical Advisor for Made of Millions, confirmed that resources aren’t being used – and social stigma is a big barrier as to why. “EAPs (Employee Assistance Programs) are less than 10% utilized,” she explained. “The resources are there, but employees still have to say, ‘I have a problem and I’m going to seek help for it.’ And then they may have to deal with the backlash of seeking help.”

The gap between recognizing mental health as a workplace issue and creating a company culture that effectively addresses it is a big one. Corporations are struggling to make the leap. Employee trust is low, stigma is high and fear of discrimination is real. 66% of managers cite one of these three aforementioned reasons as significant obstacles in managing mental health at work. As

Colin Minto, Vice President, Talent Acquisition, Planning & Employer Brand, Europe, Middle East & Africa, at Marriott International, pointed out: “They call them hidden disabilities for a reason.” He went on to explain, “People feel that being open might have negative consequences on their career and in the way that people treat them.” While Marriott has integrated mental health awareness into its culture since its inception and continues to lead in this space, Minto admits that bridging the gap between awareness and action is difficult. “I think we’re the same as any other organization. It’s a challenging conversation but we are having it across the organisation.”

However, having a proven tool, or an industry standard for managing mental health, as Lambert suggested, could be a starting point for reassuring employees they can get the help they need, while also arming managers with education on how to provide it. The payoff, potentially, could be big. As Chaudhary points out, “The workplace is a great place to reach a whole bunch of people with really high-quality information. Wellbeing doesn’t have to be boxed into the home-life bucket.”





With survey results and expert interviews illuminating clear opportunities and challenges, Verizon Media and Made of Millions set out to create a resource that could help address them.

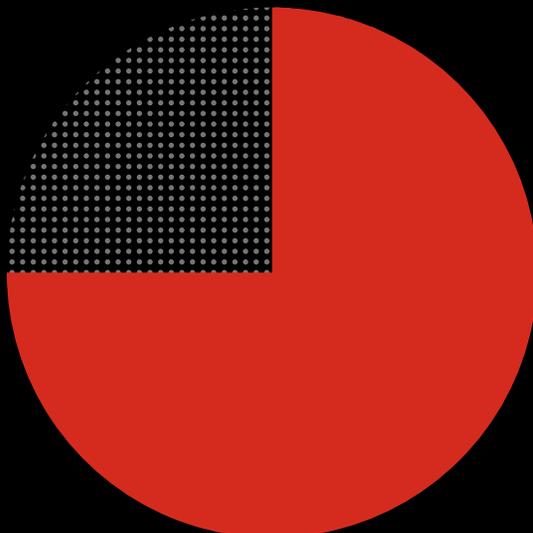
The result is **The Mental Health Matrix™** (p.19), a tool designed to destigmatize mental health and create an industry standard for defining sources of employee hardship and empowering managers to take action. The model unpacks four distinct categories of mental health issues—conditions, intersections, triggers and situations—and offers actionable ways to address each.



Workplace discrimination stands out in **India** as a key reason why employees don't reach out about mental health challenges: Managers were +75% more likely than those in other countries to name it as a roadblock to outreach.



Managers in **France** were -20% less likely than managers in other countries to say their organizations have taken action to address workplace issues emerging from the past year.



75%

of global executive leaders say having an industry standard tool to unpack and address a variety of mental health issues would be **extremely helpful** (42%) or **helpful** (33%) in managing mental health in the workplace.

The Road—and Roadblocks—to Managing Mental Health. Outside of stigma, roadblocks to workplace change include a lack of clear language to address mental health challenges, the diversity of mental health needs, frequent calls for top-down advocacy that don't address the full picture, and an over emphasis on "professionalism" culture that dissuades people from seeking help. Here's how to unblock these roadblocks and pave the road forward.

01

Lost in Translation

One of the most obvious barriers in addressing employee mental health is fumbling over the language surrounding it. Managers lack confidence in addressing issues because they are afraid of using the wrong words, with one in five saying “unclear language” and “fear of saying the wrong thing” are top concerns for effectively managing mental health conditions on their team. For example, mental “health,” “wellness,” “illness,” “disability,” “condition,” “difference” and “neurodiversity” are often used interchangeably. But, according to Brittany Linton, a psychologist and Medical Advisor for Made of Millions, not all words are equal. “The description “mental illness”

80% of managers say they worry about using the wrong language when addressing issues, like mental health, race, gender and other sensitive topics with their team.

is generally avoided these days. People also casually throw around terms like “crazy,” which is highly stigmatizing,” she told us. “Language matters in our society and culture.”

Furthermore, because mental health challenges and experiences often stem from intersectional

issues, it has become critical to keep pace with the evolving vocabulary of gender (gender dysphoria, gender pronouns), race (Black Indigenous People of Color aka BIPOC; Black, Asian and minority ethnic aka BAME, etc), and a range of inclusive terminology (ableism, ethnocentrism, implicit bias), making language even more complex for managers. Case in point: A Diversity & Inclusion glossary published by Ongig, a talent and

acquisition resource, includes 200+ terms-to-know, from AAPI—the acronym for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders—to Zi, a gender-inclusive pronoun that avoids relying on gender binary-based language. While a glossary like Ongig’s admittedly feels overwhelming, a full 90% of the workplace leaders we surveyed say they’d like a resource like this to help open dialogue about mental health with their team. 67% say they could have used something like this within the past year.

Top 5 Language Guides Requested by Management

60% Common mental health conditions



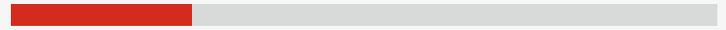
35% Race and ethnicity terminology



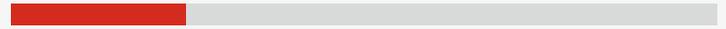
33% Disability terminology



31% Gender pronouns & related terminology



30% Sexual orientations & related terminology



The Road Forward → **Mental health and Diversity & Inclusion language guides are simple yet impactful ways to kick-start conversations about mental health in the workplace.**

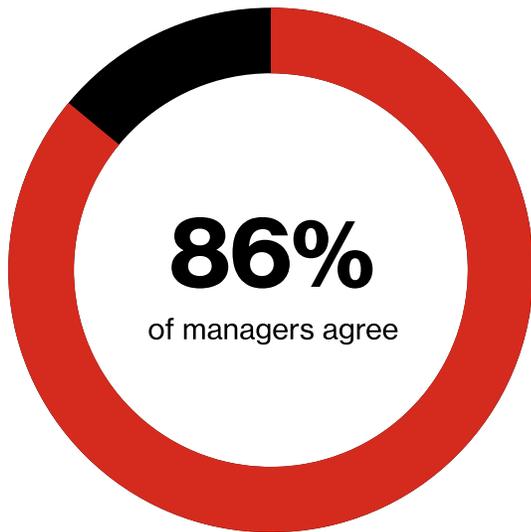
02

Professional Bias

A less-talked-about underpinning of addressing mental health in the workplace is a cultural expectation for professionalism. The deep-seated value of “being professional” encourages employees to conform to corporate protocols, from following proper email etiquette to avoiding emotional outbursts. Historically speaking, employees aren’t rewarded for cognitive difference, impulsive behavior or self-expression. Yet, mental health issues are rooted in just that—neurodiversity, emotion and vulnerability—meaning that

the mental health challenges employees face run counter to the mainstream ideals of being a good employee. This contradiction creates a deterrent for seeking help.

However, the bias toward professionalism is fast changing. Even before the pandemic, work and life were merging as technology blurred the lines between 9 and 5, home and office, working and scrolling through social media (under the guise of work, of course). Now that work from home is the norm, we've seen colleagues' bedrooms, been videobombed by pets/kids/partners/parents and toggled seamlessly between Zoom meetings and virtual schools, sometimes forgetting



“
The struggles we have all faced as a result of this year has helped to normalize conversations around mental health.

“

Not talking about mental health is not talking about a big chunk of life.

Iván Markman, Chief Business Officer, Verizon Media

which Zoom we're on. Basically, professional guards are down and, for many, it's a welcome relief.

For businesses, there's an opportunity to recognize the value of neurodiversity in the same way they understand the value of a demographically diverse workforce. Bronwyn Ott, Well-Being, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Leader at Unilever, says this will take a paradigm shift, however. "How do you shift the corporate mindset to focus on the value of mental health rather than the challenges of accommodating difference?" she told us. "Neurodiversity can help your organization succeed and evolve." Ott also points out that looking at neurodiversity through a positive lens can create a virtuous cycle. "If companies start talking about the positive side of mental health, employees will be more comfortable sharing their own stories."

This paradigm shift of personal life being integrated with work-life rather than separated from it is a foundation of Snap Inc.'s approach to mental health in the workplace. "We want employees to bring their whole self to work," Jackie Nith Ishibashi, Global Well-Being

“

When I interviewed [for Marriott], I just said, 'First off, I would like to address the elephant in the room because I have opened up publicly about this: I have OCD.' But I explained that, as a consequence, I have a different skill set. I have a solutions brain, because I've been working out catastrophic things in my head for years. And I'm not afraid to take chances on things because I've seriously dealt with much worse in my head than any business challenge.

Colin Minto, Vice President, Talent Acquisition, Planning & Employer Brand, Europe, Middle East & Africa, Marriott International

Manager at Snap Inc., told us. “This includes their home life, understanding each other's families, understanding each other's backgrounds.” Nith Ishibashi says Snap works hard to create a “safe place” for its teams. “We are bringing a sense of psychological safety so that employees don't have to feel like an imposter.” In other words, it's a two-way street: “Employees are embracing all of their identities, and the company is embracing those identities as well.”

“

When you pull people away from not being who they are, you're missing out on their unique contribution to the world.

Jackie Nith Ishibashi, Global Well-Being Manager, Snap Inc.

The Road Forward → **Redefine professionalism to include empathy and value neurodiversity. Employees will be more likely to let down their guard if company culture isn't so buttoned-up and if neurodiversity is recognized.**

03

Leveling with Leadership

When we asked managers what would be helpful in managing mental health in the workplace, it's not surprising what rose to the top: “Strong leadership who lead by example and make mental health a corporate priority from the top down.” The impact of empathetic leadership is well-understood. “Leaders can open dialogues,” Clare Lin, Senior Director, HRBP APAC, Verizon Media, explained. “Hearing how they handled a mental health situation and seeing that they are still very successful in their role is inspiring.” This is an approach Colin Minto, of Marriott International, firmly believes in. “I'm very open about my OCD. I try to break down stigma by showing that I'm a VP in a big organization—and I'm mentally ill.”

However, not every organization has leaders like Minto who are so open about their mental conditions, or who can effectively lead from the top down. For one, leaders are stretched and don't always have the time to do the job well. Addressing mental health issues can't be a “rushed conversation” as as a Diversity & Inclusion

leader we spoke with put it. “The largest challenge in getting leaders to be inclusive is making sure that they have time to really talk about these topics. It can't be a quick check-in, in two minutes, between two meetings.” Another hurdle is that leaders may not be in touch with the challenges mid- and lower-tier employees face. Psychologist Brittany Linton acknowledges mental health challenges do happen at all levels, but she also level-sets that leaders operate from a privileged perspective. “Individuals in higher leadership within an organization generally have more resources available to them, whether that's true of monetary resources, the resources to take time off or the resources of making an independent decision. Lower-level employees don't always have access to these opportunities.” In other words, the example leaders lead by may not be one others can follow.

Furthermore, statistically speaking, the executive team isn't as mentally strained as their employee base, either because of access to resources, as Linton pointed out, or just because of a natural disposition. When asked to rate the mental wellness of their industry, company and team on a 10-point scale, C-suite executives rated all notably higher, with the biggest discrepancy between leadership and others being in how they rated themselves: 82% of executive leaders rated their mental health as an 8, 9, or 10 as compared to just 58% of managers overall. The point is this discrepancy may make it hard for leaders to relate to others—and potentially hard for others to relate to them.



58% of managers overall vs. 82% of executive leaders rated their mental health as an 8,9, or 10

The Road Forward → **Level with leadership: Their messages matter, but make sure that conversations addressing mental health are coming from all corners—and levels—of the corporate culture. Employees need to relate to feel heard.**

04 Demographic Divides

To say one size doesn't fit all when it comes to mental health would be an epic understatement. Depending upon age, gender, race, geography, position, corporation size and more, mental health struggles really run the gamut. It's futile to try to call out all of the differences – that's kind of the point – but here are a few demographic differences to note.



The Road Forward → There's no single issue to tackle first – agility in managing mental health is key. The Mental Health Matrix™ is flexible enough to navigate the nuances of employee needs.

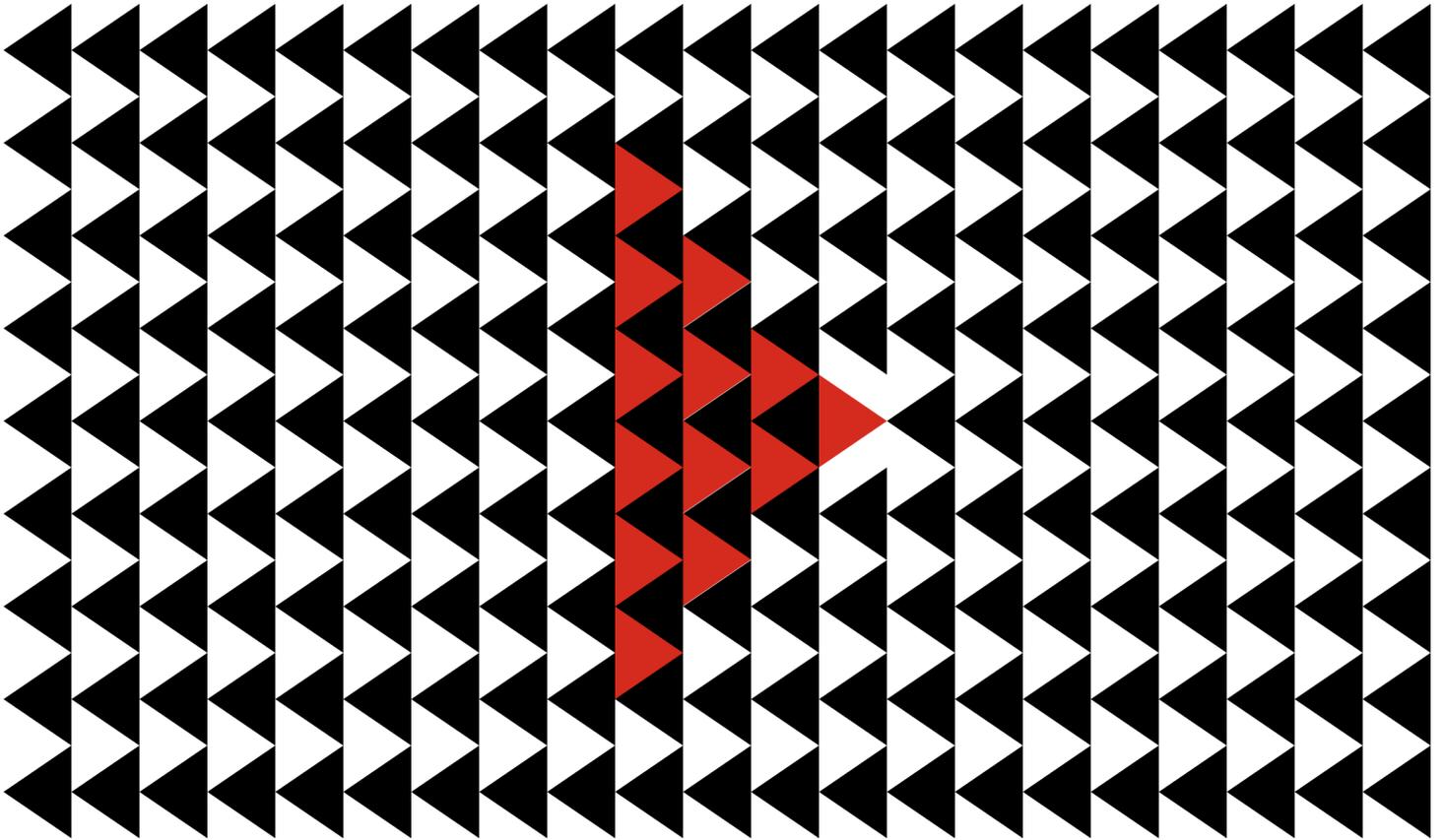
05 The Big Picture

Many organizations are missing the “big picture” of mental health. While 89% of managers are quick to recognize “Mental health is health, it should not be distinguished from physical health”, this only captures a piece of the big picture. The other piece is what constitutes mental health to begin with. Often, it's medically diagnosed conditions, such as anxiety, depression, and OCD, that get the majority of attention. But racism, burnout, caregiver stress, team conflict, toxic workplace culture, grief and many other situations, triggers and intersections can impact employee and company mental health just as significantly as more top-of-mind mental health conditions. In fact, according to managers, a disproportionate amount of mental health challenges they've faced with their teams have emerged from issues that have nothing to do with medical conditions.

It's important to paint a big picture not only to improve workplace understanding of mental health, but also destigmatize it. When managers and employees see that something they are struggling with is actually classified as a mental health concern, the topic becomes more relatable and approachable.

The Road Forward → Educate managers and employees to see mental health as more than just a diagnosis – it's part of the human condition and affects everyone.

The Case for Mapping Mental Health



A model for managing mental health in the workplace puts mental wellness on managers' radar, reduces "othering" and most importantly, shifts the script from diagnosing mental health conditions to empowering managers to take action.

In developing a model for managing mental health in the workplace, the first goal was to put mental health on the map—literally and figuratively. The reality is, without a designated tool to address mental health issues in the workplace, the topic doesn't command the attention it deserves.

“

I think this model definitely helps in showing that mental health exists on a continuum and that issues or stressors can arise that impact our overall wellbeing. Take for instance the COVID-19 pandemic or uprising of xenophobia and racism that has impacted communities of colour. The presence of these stressors may not necessarily result in a mental health condition, but they are examples of strains that could impact an employee's mental health. I think it could help managers and companies broaden their understanding that mental health is not limited to diagnosed illnesses, but can also be influenced by our personal lived experiences, or situations outside of work.

Chivon John, Global Wellness Specialist, Shopify

In fact, when we asked managers what the biggest benefit would be of a tool, or industry standard, to manage mental health in the workplace, the number one response was, “It would provide more attention to mental health: The fact that there is a tool addressing mental health in the workplace acknowledges that it deserves attention.” And while mapping out mental health issues is wrought with potential pitfalls—we recognize that mental health issues aren't as clear cut as a Myers-Briggs analysis—it's also an important first step to provide some clarity for managers who feel the topic is overwhelming at best and a liability at worse: 28% of managers we surveyed worry about the possibility of facing legal repercussions if they address mental health with their employees. Standardizing an approach provides managers with the confidence they currently lack. To that point, the second biggest advantage of modeling an approach to mental health, according to managers, is “Confidence: I'd feel more assurance in managing mental health issues if I had an approach, or model, to guide me.”

The psychologists we spoke with highlighted another reason why mapping an approach to mental health is beneficial: it lessens “othering.” According to Linton, “Being able to quickly identify and see a portion of yourself, or a part of your experience, on a map like this model helps lessen the othering that we often tend to see in the mental health discussions. It decreases the stigma.” Part of the destigmatizing impact of a model like this is seeing the full range of mental health struggles—and realizing that mental health challenges are universal, not unusual. For example, while words like “anxiety,” “depression” and “OCD” typically come to mind when thinking about mental health, issues such as discrimination, burnout, grief, pregnancy challenges and fear of rejection are equally part of this model. These are experiences that managers and employees will recognize and relate to—and they are also deserving of attention. Linton sees this as a major plus. “A model like this may actually help people begin to better identify that maybe they have had an experience that is deserving of care and attention. That's a big thing. Many people don't believe themselves to be deserving of assistance or acknowledgment.”



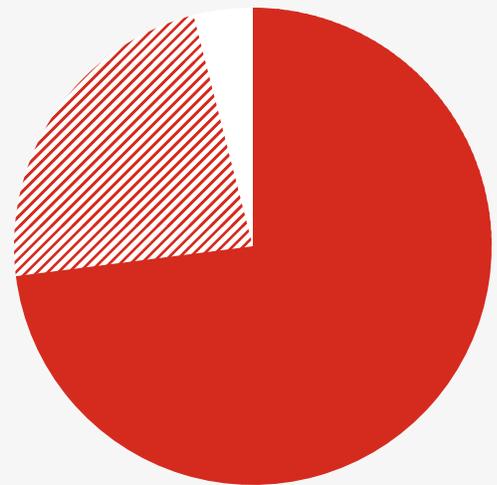
Companies are saying they don't know what to do because most people aren't using their EAP. Here's a framework for how to think about exactly what you can do.

Dr. Neha Chaudhary [On creating a mental health matrix to educate and offer guidance on mental health in the workplace]

Finally, and importantly, The Mental Health Matrix™ is anchored in action—not diagnosis. By organizing mental health issues in the broad categories of conditions, intersections, triggers and situations, managers can sidestep the aforementioned “armchair psychologist” fear and recommend an informed approach to work through the issue at hand. A “clear course of action” rounded out the top three reasons managers say a model for mapping mental health would be helpful to them. More specifically, they say the appeal is that there would be specific courses of action to follow for different categories of mental health conditions, situations and dynamics. Lambert, of Verizon Media, believes a clear course of action would be empowering to managers and employees alike: “It could be incredibly helpful and powerful for managers, or employees, to be able to understand what they are dealing with, and where to go next.”

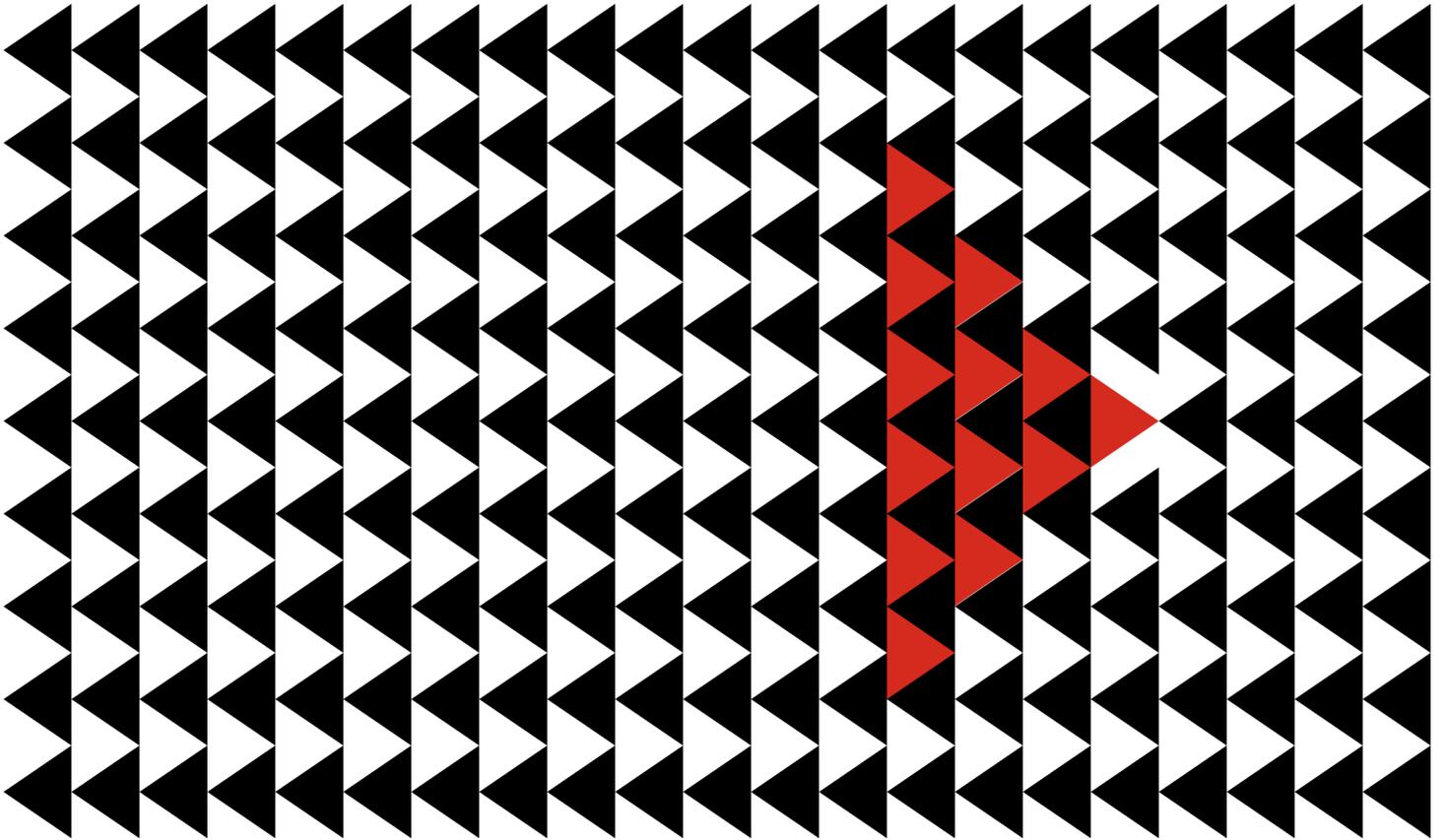
96%

of managers and corporate leaders said modeling an approach to mental health management in the workplace would be helpful to them.



Among this group, **three-quarters (73%)** say there is a time within the past year when they could have used a tool like this.

The Mental Health Matrix™



The Mental Health Matrix™ is anchored in four key actions:
Accommodating neurodiversity, **Arbitrating** discriminatory
behavior, **Addressing** workplace stressors and **Adapting** to
personal struggles.

The Mental Health Matrix™ is an area 2x2 model organized on an X and Y-axis. The X-axis classifies mental health issues as either “personal” (left) or “interpersonal” (right). The Y ranges from “onset” (bottom) to “ongoing” (top). Each axis is a continuum, designed to recognize that issues may straddle personal and interpersonal, onset and ongoing. The result is four quadrants, each with a recommended approach that encourages managers to Accommodate, Arbitrate, Address or Adapt, depending upon which quadrant the employee’s mental health challenge lies.



Management Solutions in Practice



Accommodate Neurodiversity How can I help people on my team with mental health conditions?

For example, partner with HR to grant revised work hours or work-from-home flexibility; permission to take mental health days; removal of triggering, non-essential tasks; creation of custom management materials such as written instructions or visual aids.



Arbitrate Discriminatory Behavior: How can I reduce systemic discrimination in the workplace?

For example, advocating on behalf of this employee with HR, granting communication limitations with problematic coworkers; acknowledging the potential for systemic discrimination in the workplace and making yourself available as an empathetic listener; circulation of language guides and scheduling meetings to review them; sharing therapy or self-care resources.



Address Workplace Stressors: How can I reduce workplace triggers?

For example, partner with HR to grant revised work hours or work-from-home flexibility; re-evaluate employee workload and responsibilities; removal of triggering, non-essential tasks; granting communication limitations with problematic coworkers; paid time-off for employees experiencing unique challenges or crises.



Adapt to Personal Struggles: How can I help people on my team who are going through a challenging time?

For example, partner with HR to grant revised work hours or work-from-home flexibility; share therapy or self-care resources; paid time-off for employees experiencing unique challenges or crises; re-evaluate employee workload and responsibilities.

Most employees will traverse numerous quadrants over the course of their careers. Oftentimes, they'll exist in multiple quadrants at once, which reinforces the need for individualized approaches, rather than standardized responses to complex mental health challenges.



Let's Take This Example



Sasha is a 30-year-old, queer, Black employee. She lives in a one-bedroom apartment with her partner of 3 years, Mackenzie, who is diagnosed with an autoimmune condition.

When the pandemic struck, Mackenzie was furloughed, making Sasha the sole earner

in their household. This was a huge stressor, on top of existing fears they had about contracting the virus given Mackenzie's immunocompromised status.

In a matter of weeks, Sasha was in charge of their finances, all errands that involved going outside and an increasing workload, alongside countless other stressors caused by the pandemic, such as a lack of social support and access to healthy coping mechanisms.

Come summer, the rise in global protests related to racial injustice added a new and complex layer of mental strain. This included exposure to traumatic imagery, a constant stream of triggering conversations and news coverage and discriminatory beliefs shared online by members of her organization.

By July, Sasha had hit a severe breaking point. She was emotionally burnt out, overwhelmed, traumatized and overworked. Staying quiet was no longer an option, so she set up a meeting with her manager to discuss solutions.

At this point in time, Sasha is existing in 3 out of 4 quadrants. She and her manager have a conversation about her mental health. They land on the following action items:



Arbitrate Discriminatory Behavior:

Sasha is negatively impacted by a direct team member's discriminatory beliefs on race. Sasha is allowed to transition off the project she shares with this individual, and the issue is brought to the attention of HR. Meanwhile, her company begins instating a variety of mandatory Diversity & Inclusion training.



Address Workplace Stressors:

Sasha is overallocated. In addition to taking the above project off her plate, they remove a few other tasks that allow her more flexibility and lessen stress and overwork.



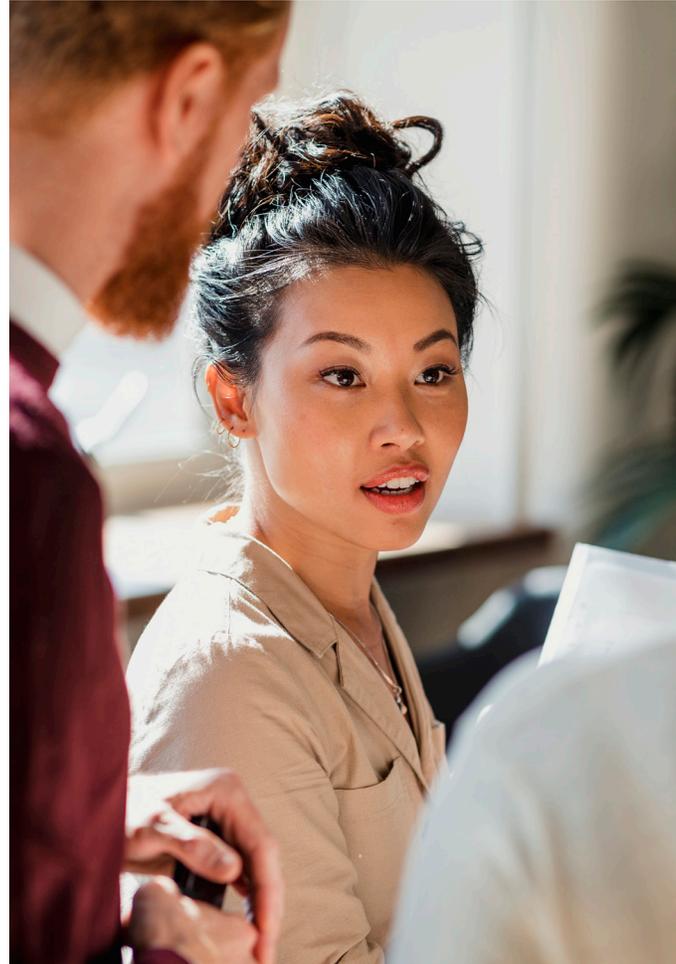
Adapt to Personal Struggles:

Sasha's manager understands the many roles she has to play at home given her partner's unemployment and disability. They revise some of her weekly meetings to allow Sasha more time for errands and self-care. Her manager also provides links to internal resources, including information on their EAP and other benefits, and an educational hub about therapy options.

Disclaimer: Specific solutions will vary based on company, location, circumstance and employee role. In many scenarios, challenges should be escalated to HR or other supportive departments. The following recommendations serve only as examples.



A key takeaway from surveying managers and corporate leaders about the mental health challenges they've experienced on their teams is that the vast majority fall within the bottom two quadrants—**situations** (83%) and **triggers** (93%). These are areas that managers are qualified to handle, such as team conflict, presentation anxiety, burnout and caregiver stress. Put another way, managing many mental health challenges in the workplace align with the skills of managers, not medical professionals. At the same time, the model elevates these more common workplace stressors: An issue that may have previously been written off as “work stress,” or simply “life,” is recategorized as part of employee mental wellness, creating a more complete picture of what mental health is and what managers can do to address the mental health of their teams.



Corporate leaders—those in C-suite roles—are the most enthusiastic about having an industry standard for modeling and managing mental health. They are **35%** more likely to say a tool like this would be “extremely helpful;” **40%** more interested in developing an industry standard for managing mental health; and **50%** more interested in getting the “complete picture” of what constitutes mental health.



Managers in **Canada** were particularly interested (+32%) in a model that unpacks a range of mental health conditions and provides recommendations for handling various workplace dynamics.

Mental Health Hot Topics. This past year has taxed teams as they sheltered at home, reckoned with racial inequality, absorbed the grief of the global pandemic and managed financial strain, virtual school, depression and much more. While mental health needs take many forms, three key areas have emerged from the struggles of this year as mental health hot topics: Employee burnout, intersectionality's impact on mental wellness and caregiver stress. Here's a look at each, and what these challenges have taught us.

01

Burned Out

Two-thirds of global managers report they are burned out. This will come as no surprise to anyone who has weathered the personal and professional fallout from the events of the past year (population: all of us). 94% say their teams are facing burnout, as well. "COVID burnout is particularly palpable right now, but we can't adequately address it because there's no end in sight," Brittany Linton, Psychologist, Medical Advisor for Made of Millions, told us. "Even with the vaccine rolling out, there are still a lot of questions about what work will be like next year. How do you address long-known and uncertain burnout?" Perhaps even more worrisome than the wide scale, inevitable burnout managers and employees are dealing with is the severity of the situation: Managers rank burnout as the third most severe mental health challenge they are facing, after COVID-related stress and depression, placing it above 37 other mental health categories we surveyed, from financial strain to substance use disorders. Adding to the strain, managers say burnout is one of the mental health challenges they feel least equipped to handle, ranking it the eighth-most difficult out of 40 challenges.

77% of managers agree, "The hustle mentality of work is outdated."

Complicating matters even more, burnout isn't as simple as "work fatigue." Managers identified 10 very different types of burnout they've

experienced on their teams, from workplace anxiety to personal issues to just plain boredom. Addressing burnout means finding the source and customizing the solution. Here's a breakdown of the top five sources of burnout and, importantly, what managers can do about them.

The Sources of—and Solutions for—Workplace Burnout

Personal Issues 41%

Pressure managing work alongside of personal stressors

Try this → Temporary adjustments to schedule, role or work set-up to address personal needs

Workplace anxiety 40%

Fear of what will happen in the future that will impact work

Try this → Regular reassurances to alleviate worry and transparency on changes

Long hours 39%

The inability to unplug, working long days or pulling all nighters

Try this → Company-wide breaks, like meeting-free Fridays or surprise 3-day weekends

Personal pressure 34%

Pressure I put on myself, or my team puts on themselves

Try this → Achievement recognition that rewards accomplishments, not just big benchmarks

Career burnout 30%

Burnout that occurs from having to work so many years

Try this → New challenges aligned with personal passions rather than corporate goals

02

Intersectional is Directional

If the #MeToo movement, racial protests and hate crimes toward Asian communities have made anything clear, it's that discriminatory behavior is still pervasive in life and at work. "The trauma is not going away because the needs have not abated," psychologist Brittany Linton stated. "This is a long road." Psychologist Jody Adewale agrees: "I'm seeing a lot of racial identity issues." The result is that the mental health of employees cannot be understood without a lens into the unique challenges individuals face because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, age, socioeconomic status or other demographic markers of difference. Three-quarters (77%) of managers agree that discrimination directly impacts the mental wellness of employees in the workplace, a sentiment felt even more so by younger employees (69% of Baby Boomers agree with this sentiment vs. 82% of Gen Zs). And 89% believe that mental health should be addressed alongside Diversity & Inclusion training as discrimination creates its own set of mental health conditions.

“

Diversity is not just your background, but the uniqueness of how you respond to the world. If you pull people away from not being who they are, you're missing out on their unique contribution to the world.

Colin Minto, Vice President, Talent Acquisition, Planning & Employer Brand, Europe

Topping managers' lists of identity markers that have intersected with mental health concerns are age, followed by gender, socioeconomics, politics and race (disability, sexuality, religion, parental status, national origin and pregnancy round out their lists). Perhaps more interesting than the types of intersectionality issues managers face are the solutions they propose. When asked the most effective way to build an intersectional workforce—one that incorporates people of different genders, sexualities, races, religions and backgrounds—several ideas beyond Diversity & Inclusion training popped up. Notably, the most popular idea among managers was to empower young employees to call out corporate practices that are outdated. In some cases,

creating a more intersectional workforce could be as simple as adding gender pronouns to business cards: 84% of Gen Z vs. 55% of Baby Boomers are for it.



Markets varied in opinion on how to best create an intersectional workforce: The U.S. prefers Diversity & Inclusion Training (+48%); Canada opts for a Zero Tolerance Policy (+43%); India was disproportionately more likely to vote for Cross-organizational Teams (+71%); Taiwan was more interested in Empathy as a Hiring Criteria: (+15%); and the U.K. and France were more even across the board.

How to Create an Intersectional Workforce

Outside of Diversity & Inclusion training, these are the top ideas for addressing intersectionality in the workplace.

Encourage Young Employees to Speak-up: Provide younger employees with safe forums to question corporate practices they feel to be outdated within the organization.

Zero Tolerance: Enforce a zero-tolerance discrimination policy.

Education: Dedicate one month each year to learning about marginalized groups.

Diversity in Upper Management: Increase diversity at leadership levels, not just among mid-level and junior employees.

Cross-generational Teams: Create cross-organizational teams that bring together people of different ages, races, genders, sexualities, races and religions.

03

Mother, May I?

Mixing parenthood with work isn't new. This past year has been especially challenging as parents and guardians struggle to find childcare and navigate virtual schooling during the pandemic... all while potentially helping their own parents, who are most vulnerable to the virus. Caregiver stress is at an all-time high. All of this is bringing a quintessential question for many moms, in particular, back to the fore: Mother, May I? Put another way, can motherhood be truly compatible with work? While dads, too, feel the pain, the fact is that 100% of job loss in the U.S. in December 2020 was to women, many of whom were mothers sidestepping work to take care of kids.¹ This is a sobering statistic and highlights how, more than a half century after the fight for gender equality in the workplace and beyond, dynamics remain uneven. Further backing this up, a recent Fortune article on women's workplace exodus during COVID-19 says that the return of women to the workforce will trail men by two full years, and recovery isn't likely to reach pre-pandemic levels until 2024.

One result of the past year of caregiver stress is the so-called "baby bust," as would-be parents put off having more children until the pandemic subsides. Another is a surge in motherhood mental health issues, which makes sense. "Once the baby comes, you have nothing else, but your body and no sleep and no connection to a sense of fulfillment or intelligence or connection outside of your baby," Paige Bellenbaum, founding director of The Motherhood Center, explained. "And then the pandemic came up, right?" In a clear nod to the need for extra help for parents during this unusual time, nearly all (93%) of managers we surveyed felt there was more their organizations could do to support new moms and dads. But Bellenbaum also acknowledges the flip side of the coin—namely, that when everyone is struggling, special workplace accommodations can't only be for those who have kids. "Because of the pandemic, workplaces have provided parents with more work flexibility than other people," she told us. "And it's become very loud and clear in a lot of companies, 'This isn't fair.' Hardworking, dedicated employees feel like they were getting the short end of the stick."

This dynamic is a difficult one. Parents do face challenges in work-life balance that non-parents don't, but while some local laws provide specific protection based on parental status, it shouldn't be a privilege that results in special accommodations for some but not others. The Mental Health Matrix™ strives to even the playing field by highlighting parenting issues and caregiver stress alongside other personal situations that impact employee mental health and are deserving of attention too.

1 <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/01/11/women-account-for-100percent-of-jobs-lost-in-december-new-analysis.html>



1 in 4



Managers say they've had to navigate conversations about caregiver stress with their team directly due to the impact of this year



According to managers, the U.S. workforces are disproportionately feeling the strain of caregiver stress (+41%)

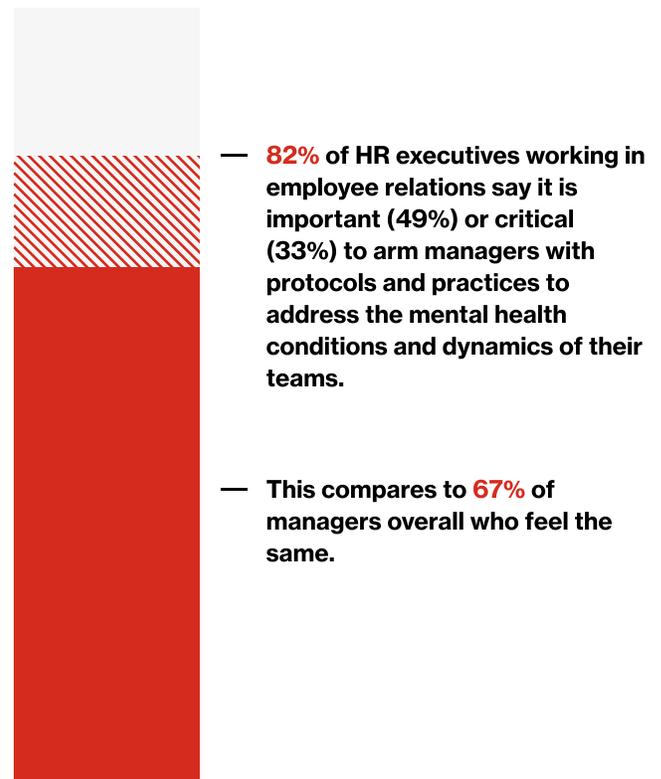
HR on the Brink. By empowering managers to handle the mental health challenges on their teams, corporations will alleviate the bottleneck HR is experiencing as they face an onslaught of employee needs at a time when they are on the brink themselves.

It's crystal clear from survey data that human resource managers are tapped out. As the go-to department to handle the more personal side of the business, HR executives have been on the frontlines of employee mental health at a watershed moment in time. Simply put, they are beyond capacity and on the brink: 91% of HR execs say that "this year has been their hardest year of work, ever" (vs. 84% of managers) and 82% have questioned their own mental health this year (vs. 74% of managers). Their awareness of employees' struggles is unsurprisingly more acute, with 94% recognizing that this past year has taken its toll on their organization's mental wellness. And when asked which mental health challenges they've encountered over the past year, they over-index on all of them—from anxiety and depression to racism and burnout. Despite the disproportionate toll this year has taken on HR, they are less likely to address their own mental health, with only 49% having reached out for help as compared to 62% of managers overall. Yet, the expectation is that employee mental health is HR's responsibility: one in five managers admit that the reason they can't, or won't, address their team's mental health is because, "It's Human Resources' job, not mine."

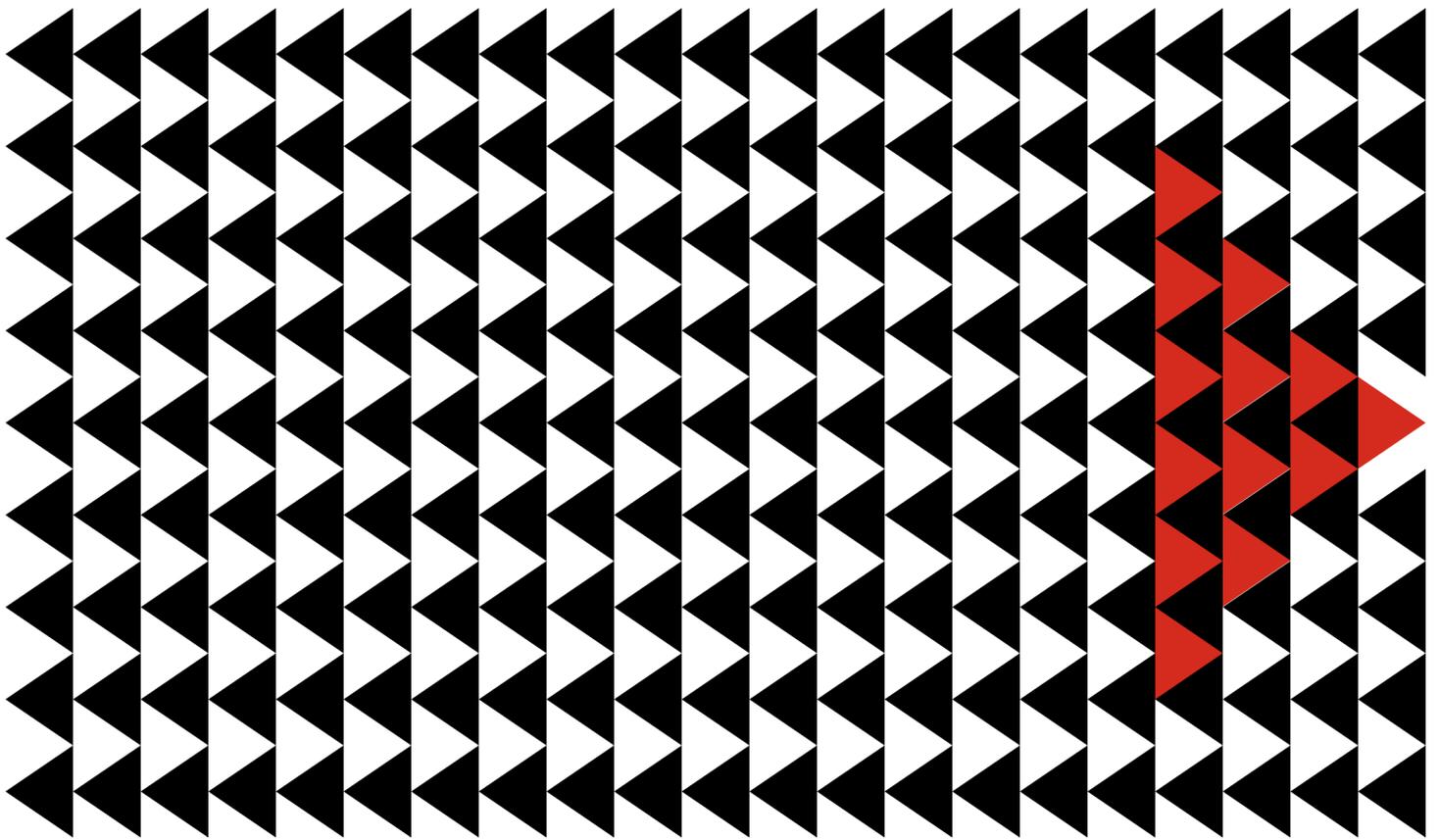
The problem with passing the mental health torch to human resources is twofold. First, HR managers may not be as effective if they, too, are struggling and feeling the weight of these times. Second, there are only so many of them. There is a bottleneck effect happening at the HR level due to the increase in mental health challenges teams are facing. This bottleneck is unlikely to be alleviated, even when the pandemic comes to an end, as employee mental health was already low prior to the events of the past year. And, as many psychologists and leaders point out, the aftershock of this past year will have a powerful longtail. Kristiana Carlet Stagno, Vice President, International Sales, Verizon Media, put it this way: "The real challenge around mental health is something that we are going to be

facing well into 2022. The minute people are able to go back to the 'new normal' and are finally able to relax, that is where all the problems naturally come out. When that adrenaline goes down, more mental health challenges will come up."

Empowering managers to address the mental wellness of their teams, rather than relying on human resources, is the backup that HR departments need. The Mental Health Matrix™ is a first step in easing the bottleneck effect happening at the HR level. "Equipping managers to be able to handle these situations, to be able to direct their teams to the right resources and support them, is what is needed."



Catalysts for Mental Wellness



While leadership can create an empathetic company culture, messages about mental health can get lost in translation as they trickle down from the top. We all play a part in acting as translators, including managers diagnosed with mental health conditions and younger generations entering the workforce with increased awareness.

Gen Z

The general consensus among managers is that younger generations can help change how we think about, discuss and approach workplace mental health.



that Gen Z employees have the power to transform workplace mental health thinking for the better.

A full 88% of those we surveyed agree with this sentiment with, not surprisingly, Gen Zs leading the charge (94% agree). Part of the reason Zs are so well-poised to be change agents for mental health in the workplace is that mental health has been on their radar for more than a decade. As the first generation to navigate social media and smartphones in middle school, Zs have felt the mental impact of comparison culture and digital burnout firsthand. Furthermore, they aged up in a tumultuous time, where world issues from climate change to gun reform to fake news weighed heavily upon them. Skyrocketing suicide rates among teens globally underscore the severity of mental strain this generation has endured.

As a result, Gen Z has prioritized mental health in their lives and has made it a definitive cause for their generation. This comes through clearly in our study as Gen Z managers were consistently more aware of, and sensitive to, most of the mental health conditions, intersections, triggers and situations that we presented them with. For example, 75% of Gen Z managers say they've encountered a mental health "condition" (e.g. OCD, ADHD, depression, anxiety) on their team as compared to just 53% of Baby Boomers—a surprising statistic considering Gen Zs have just entered the workforce. Similarly, Zs were nearly twice as likely to report encountering mental health issues linked to discriminatory behavior (i.e., "intersections") than were Baby Boomers (63% vs. 38%, respectively). They are far more attuned to hate crimes (41% vs. 16% among Boomers) and, in particular, are sensitive to issues surrounding gender and sexuality. 67% of Gen Z managers who had experienced gender discrimination or transphobia on their team said the issue was severe versus just 14% of Baby Boomers and 64% report having witnessed severe issues surrounding LGBTQ+ rights and homophobia as compared to 30% of Baby Boomers. While this generational divide is, not surprisingly, greatest between the youngest and oldest generations we surveyed, Gen Z's alertness to mental health issues popped up throughout the study, even in comparison to millennials.

Another reason Gen Zs are well-poised to open up dialogues about mental wellness is that being raw, real and vulnerable comes naturally to them. "They just have this incredible amount of transparency. I think when you talk about bringing your whole self, that really fits into what that



While Gen Zs can be leaders in helping companies open up about mental health, it's important that organizations don't lean too heavily on Zs, who already feel the weight of the world on their shoulders. Zs need backup, too.

Managers with mental health conditions

Lastly, some of the biggest advocates for mental health in the workplace are managers who have been diagnosed with mental health conditions themselves.

generation is trying to do," Nith Ishibashi, of Snap Inc., told us. For them, it's like, "Here we are, this is what you get."

Gen Z's natural openness, combined with their awareness of and empathy for neurodiversity, makes them ideal members of the workforce to broker conversations about mental health. And, despite far fewer years of management experience, they generally report feeling more equipped in tackling these conversations than do managers with more experience. Empowering them with a tool like The Mental Health Matrix™ could make their leadership in the mental health space even more impactful.

Twenty-eight percent of respondents, including 39% of Gen Z respondents, report that they have either a self-diagnosed or clinically diagnosed mental health condition. These managers, like Gen Z, report being more aware of mental wellness across the board. They are more likely than managers, who do not have a mental health condition, to recognize the mental toll of the past year (71% vs. 61%); they are more likely to see the link between discrimination and mental health (85% vs. 74%); and, tellingly, they are more likely to have been sought out by colleagues for help with a mental health issue (87% vs. 72%).

These managers have the empathetic, judgment-free ear that employees need to get dialogues started—an important first step in creating a company culture conducive to seeking help. Chivon John of Shopify underscores how critical it is to create a workplace “culture of vulnerability,” as she calls it, to effectively address employee mental health. “We want our employees to feel psychologically safe and comfortable to bring their full selves to work.” Managers who have been diagnosed with a mental health condition may be able to breed trust and nurture vulnerability in ways that many of those who haven't faced mental health challenges just can't. And it's this trust and vulnerability that will ultimately create a culture that fosters real change.

Conclusion

The events of the past year, a new generation of workers attuned to neurodiversity and the business case for supporting mental wellness at work have culminated to create a watershed moment for companies to put the mental health of their employees at the fore. The Mental Health Matrix™ marks a first step in addressing employees' mental health and jump-starting wide-scale change.

Verizon Media, a division of Verizon Communications, Inc., houses a trusted media ecosystem of premium brands like Yahoo, TechCrunch and Engadget to help people stay informed and entertained, communicate and transact, while creating new ways for advertisers and media partners to connect. From XR experiences to advertising and content technology, Verizon Media is an incubator of innovation and is revolutionizing the next generation of content creation in a 5G world.

The Made of Millions Foundation is a global advocacy nonprofit on a mission to change how the world perceives mental health. The foundation's award-winning properties leverage digital tools to destigmatize suffering and democratize access to lifesaving information.

Culture Co-op, the research partner for this study, is a boutique trends and insights agency specializing in generational insights, ethnographic research, and quantitative studies.