



# Workplace Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

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MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF  
**LABOR & ECONOMIC  
OPPORTUNITY**



Protecting the safety and  
health of Michigan workers  
for 50 years.

# **MIOSHA Mission**

Help Protect the  
Safety and Health  
of Michigan  
Workers!

# **MIOSHA Motto**

Educate Before  
We Regulate!



# Workplace Safety and Health Is:

- Preventing injuries, illnesses, and fatalities in the workplace.



# Workplace Safety and Health Is:

- Preventing injuries, illnesses, and fatalities in the workplace.





# This is Our Job Too!

- Anxiety disorders, depression, suicide
- All affected by the workplace



# Suicide Rate of Construction Workers in Michigan

- 204,000 workers employed in construction in 2024
- 175 construction workers took their own lives in 2022\*
- 12 construction workers were fatally injured in 2024\*\*
- $175 / 12 = 14.6$
- **For every 1 construction worker killed on the job, 14.6 kill themselves.**
- Source: 2024 Michigan Suicide Prevention Commission Annual Report
- Source: MIOSHA



# Incidence Rates of Construction Workers in Michigan

.086 Suicide\*  
.006 Workplace Fatality\*  
.7 Recordable (only) cases\*\*  
1.1 DART Cases\*\*



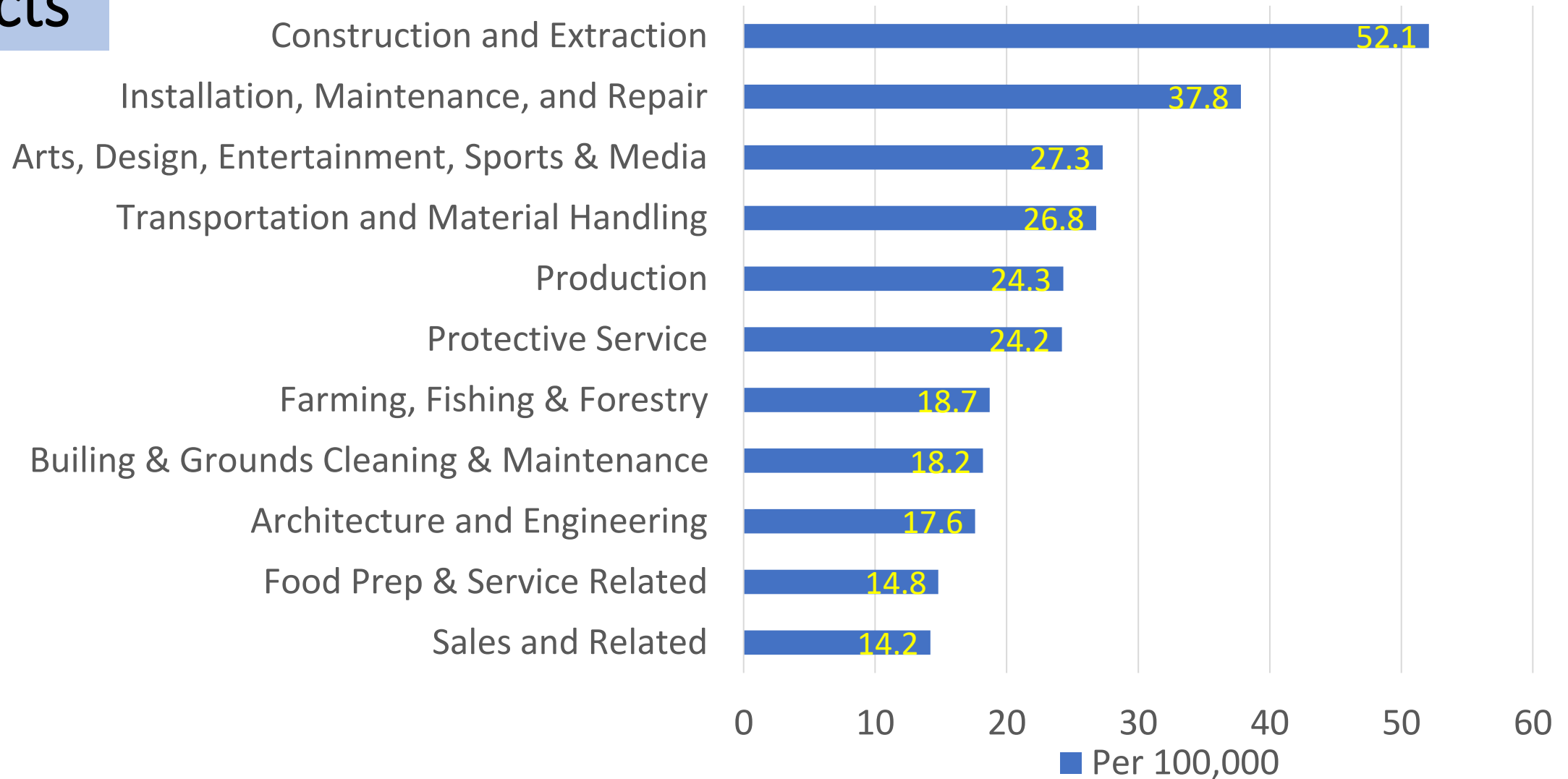
\* Calculated from data on previous slide

\*\* Bureau of Labor Statistics



## Industry Impacts

### 2015 Rate of Suicide by Profession\*



\* Source: CDC <https://www.registerednursing.org/articles/suicide-rates-profession/>





# Mental Health in the Workplace



LEO Initiatives



Mental Health in the Workplace

Investing in mental health and safety is critical to build strong workplaces, a strong workforce and strong communities.

Employees and employers across the state are encouraged to review these resources and build on mental health strategies that will have a positive impact on employee wellbeing, the employer's bottom line and our communities.

[Michigan.gov/leo/initiatives/mental-health-in-the-workplace](https://Michigan.gov/leo/initiatives/mental-health-in-the-workplace)

LEO  
Website




[Safety and Health Topics](#) / [Workplace Stress](#)

## Workplace Stress



# WORKPLACE STRESS

Make Work Better – Mental Health Matters

	
Understanding the Problem	>
Guidance & Tips for Employers	>
Training Resources	>
Real-World Solutions	>
Outreach Materials	>
Workers' Rights	>

### Overview

Stress can be harmful to our health and increase mental health challenges. Mental health challenges can include clinical mental illness and substance use disorders as well as other emotions like stress, grief, feeling sad and anxious, where these feelings are temporary and not part of a diagnosable condition. While there are many things in life that induce stress, work can be one of those factors. However, workplaces can also be a key place for resources, solutions, and activities designed to improve our mental health and well-being.

Workplace stress and poor mental health can negatively affect workers through<sup>1</sup>:

- Job performance
- Productivity
- Work engagement and communication
- Physical capability and daily functioning



Understanding the Problem



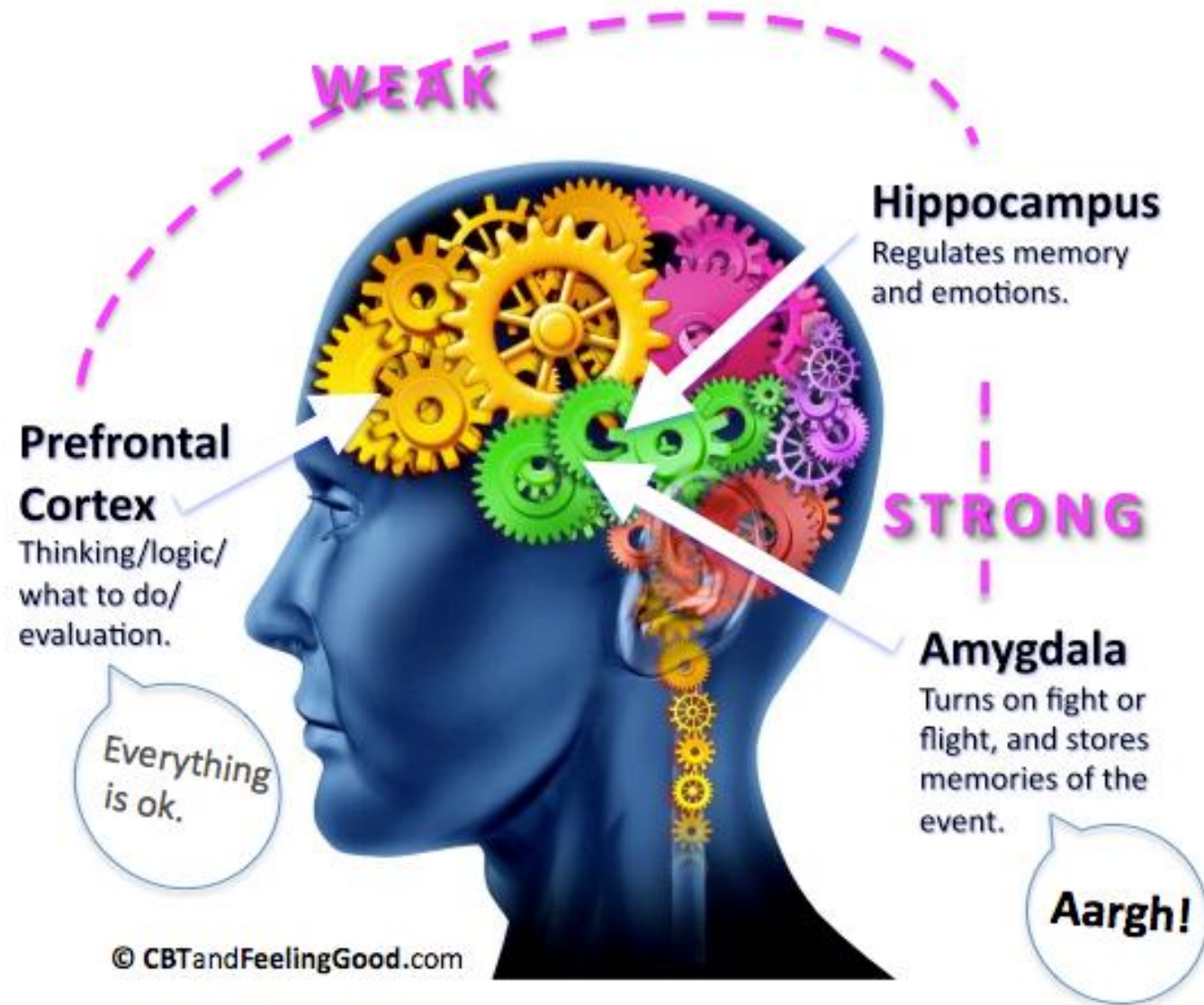
Guidance and Tips for

### Statistics

- Nearly one in five US adults live with a mental illness<sup>2</sup>.
- Workplace stress has been reported to cause 120,000 deaths in the US each year<sup>3</sup>.
- Approximately 65% of U.S. workers surveyed have characterized work as being a very significant or somewhat significant source of stress in each year from 2019-2021<sup>4</sup>.
- 83% of US workers suffer from work-related stress  
54% of workers report that work stress affects their home life<sup>5</sup>.

OSHA  
Website





# THE BRAIN ON TOXIC STRESS AND TRAUMA

Normal responses to abnormal experiences

## Abnormal experiences:

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Chronic work stress
- Climate change trauma
- COVID-19 pandemic
- Poverty
- Racial trauma, violence and reckoning
- War



**Fight**  
**Flight**  
**Freeze**  
**Fawn**

## Normal *automatic* bodily responses:

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Body aches
- Brain fog
- Confusion
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Fearful
- Fed up
- Feeling physically older
- Irritated
- Numb
- Untrusting

# MENTAL EFFECTS OF TOXIC STRESS AND TRAUMA

## Fight

- Lash out, angry outbursts
- Violence toward self or others

## Flight

- Avoidance of emotions, people, places
- Struggle to focus
- Difficult to trust and form healthy relationships

## Freeze

- Diminished mental processing, mental fog
- Anxiety
- Difficulty planning, goal setting

## Submit

- Sadness, depression, appeasement





## THE IMPACT OF TOXIC AND CHRONIC STRESS

**Chronic stress is linked to other conditions, both psychological and physical. These can include:**



Diseases such as hypertension, heart disease, obesity and metabolic syndrome, Type II diabetes and arthritis.



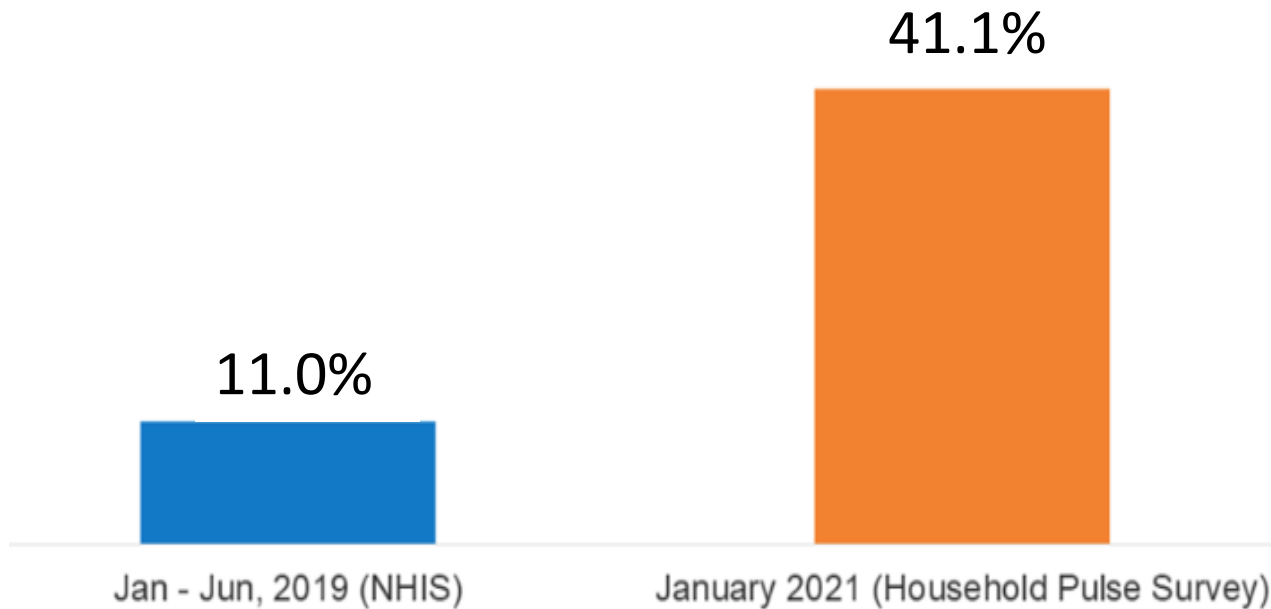
Addiction to alcohol, nicotine and/or prescription drugs, and behavioral-related activities such as addiction to the internet, food or gambling.



Mood disorders and anxiety disorders, which are common secondary diagnoses for people with chronic stress.



## Average Share of Adults Reporting Symptoms of Anxiety Disorder and/or Depressive Disorder January – June 2019 Vs. January 2021



### ***The Impact of the Pandemic***

With the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans experienced toxic and chronic stress, and many have experienced significant trauma.

**This has increased symptoms of anxiety and depression in a large way.**

NOTES: Percentages are based on responses to the GAD-2 and PHQ-2 scales. Pulse findings (shown here for January 6 – 18, 2021) have been stable overall since data collection began in April 2020.

# Share of Adults Reporting Symptoms of Anxiety and/or Depressive Disorder, February 2023

## All Adults

All Adults 32.3%

## Age

18-24 49.9%

25-49 38.0%

50-64 29.3%

65+ 20.1%

NOTE: Adults having symptoms of depressive or anxiety disorder were determined based on having a score of 3 or more on the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-2) and/or Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-2) scale.

SOURCE: KFF analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, 2023

**KFF**

**48M**

In 2020, roughly 48M people suffered from an anxiety disorder.

**21M**

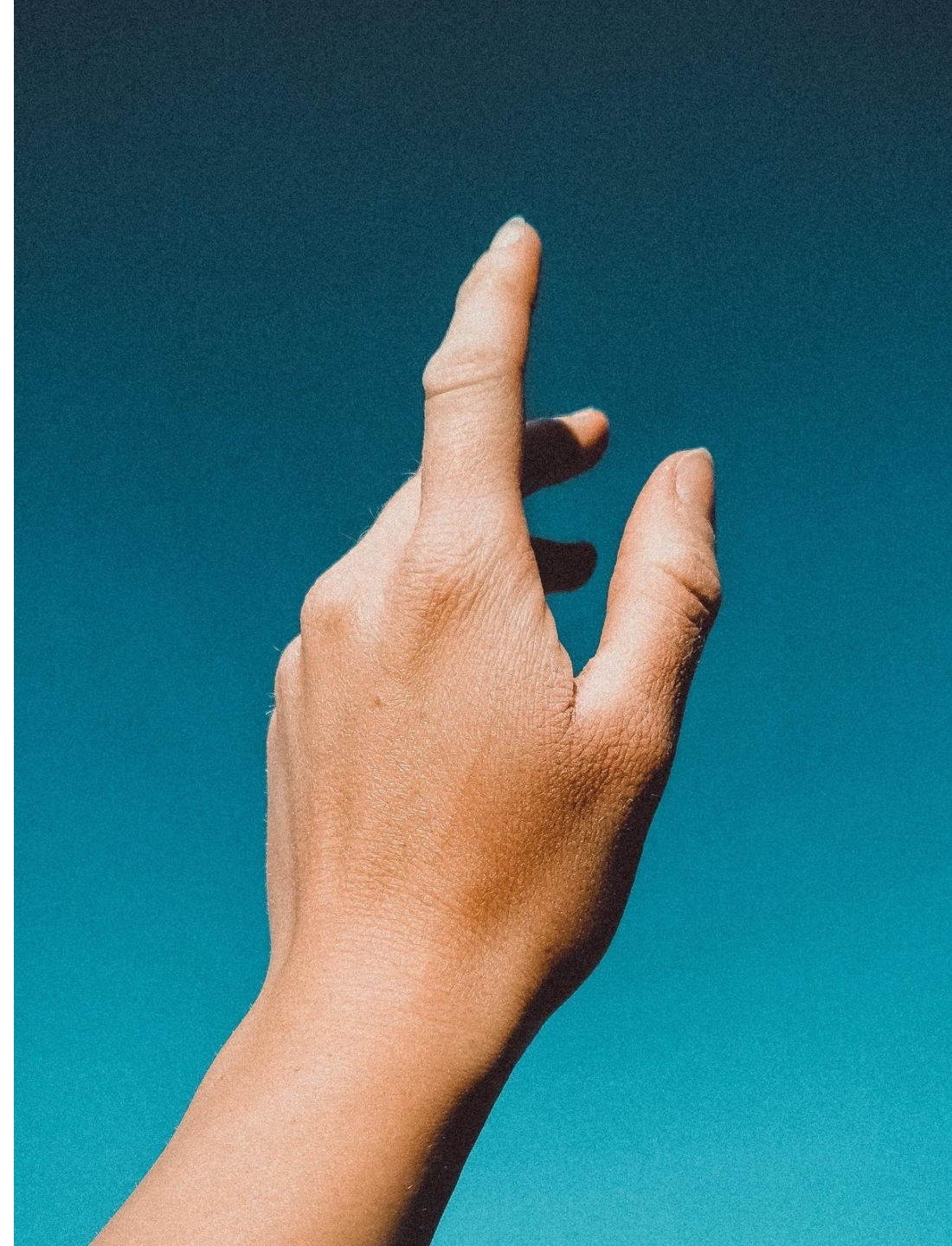
While 21M suffered from a major depressive episode.

**46%**

However, less than half, 46.2%, received treatment for a mental illness in 2020.

**21%**

Overall, 21% of the U.S. adult population will have a mental illness in any given year.

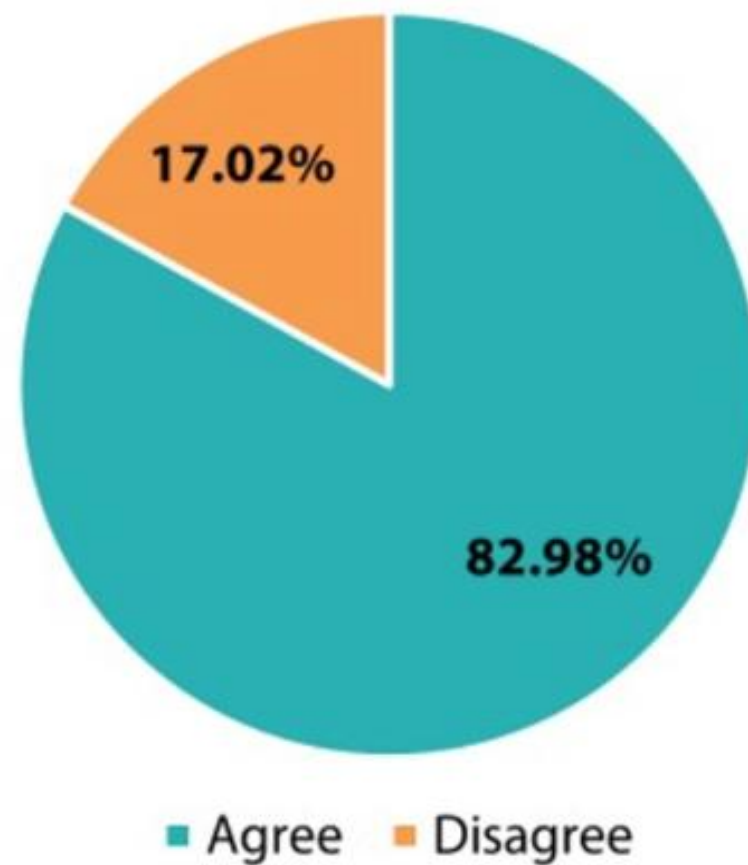


## WORKPLACE STRESS AND IMPACTS ARE PREVALENT

### *2021 MHA Workplace Survey*

- Exhaustion, including emotional exhaustion, is one of the earliest signs of burnout.
- Employees who are feeling emotionally drained from work are at a higher risk of workplace stress, leading to burnout and other mental health concerns.

## I FEEL EMOTIONALLY DRAINED FROM MY WORK



Source: [mhanational.org](https://mhanational.org)

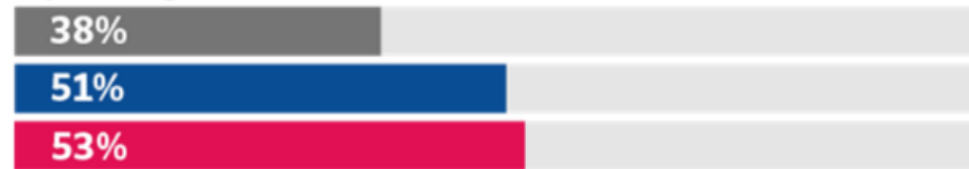
# THIS STRESS IS PERVASIVE ACROSS ALL INDUSTRIES

Especially those interacting with customers/clients

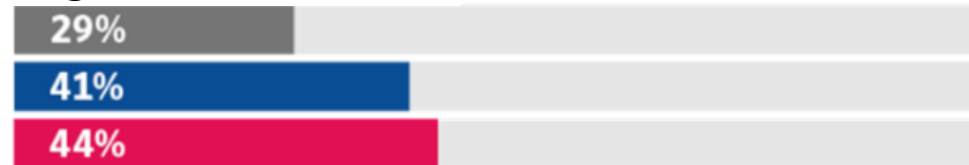
## Frequency of Feelings at Work in the Past Month

% Always or Almost Always/Very/Quite Frequently

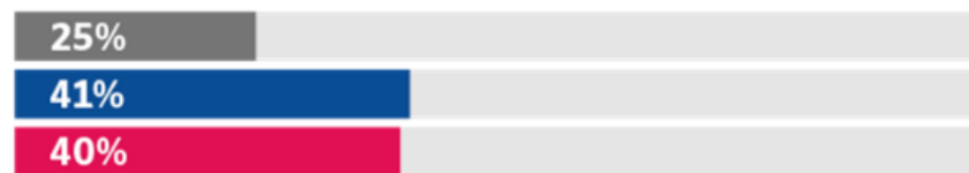
### Physical Fatigue



### Cognitive Weariness



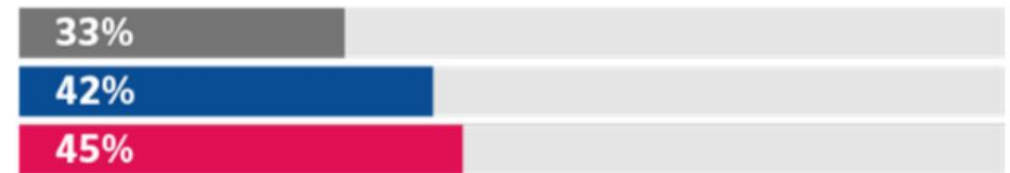
### Emotional Exhaustion



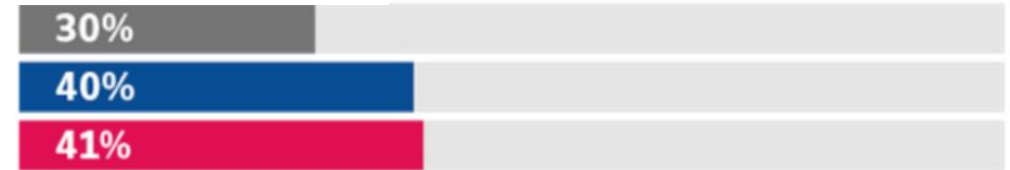
## In the past month, mental health and physical problems kept me from achieving my goals at work

% Strongly Agree / Agree

### Mental Health

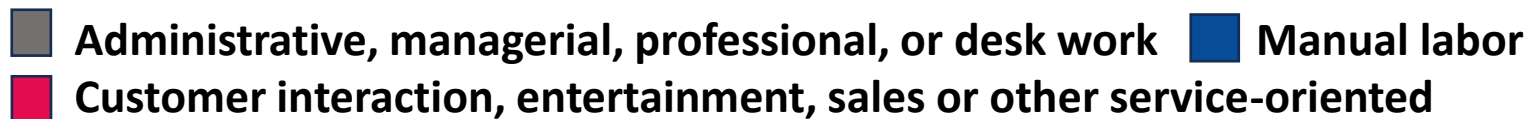


### Physical Fatigue



## My employer provides its employees with adequate health insurance

% Strongly agree / Agree





# Industry Impacts-Substance Abuse

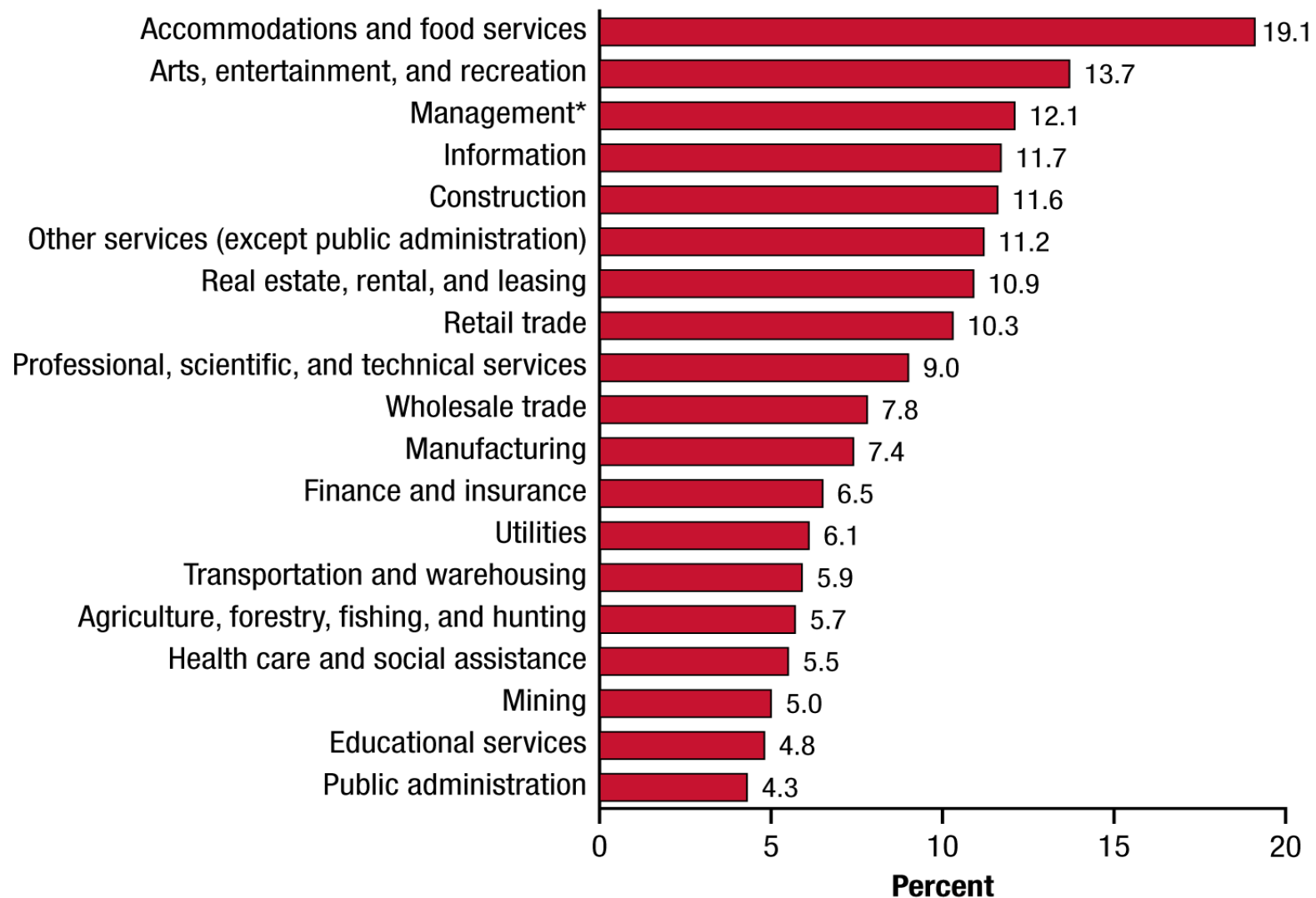
Figure 1. Past month heavy alcohol use among adults aged 18 to 64 employed full time, by industry category: combined 2008 to 2012





# Industry Impacts-Illicit Drugs

Figure 2. Past month illicit drug use among adults aged 18 to 64 employed full time, by industry category: combined 2008 to 2012



# Building the Business Case



## WHY THE WORKPLACE?

- Working people spend most of their waking hours at work.
- **65% of Employees surveyed identified their job as the #1 stress in their lives.**
- Workplaces are already bearing the brunt of these costs of toxic and chronic stress, trauma, and unsafe mental health challenges.
- Workplaces are most likely the best place to offer education, support and the ability to impact good outcomes.

## Impact of Job on Mental Health, by Age Group

Over the last 6 months, what type of impact has your job had on your mental health?

■ % Extremely or somewhat negative

■ % Extremely or somewhat positive



GALLUP PANEL, AUG. 23-SEPT. 7, 2022

GALLUP®

## Ignoring Is Expensive

### \$4 return for each dollar invested in mental health treatment

Typical Invisible Costs:

- **Absenteeism** due to major **depressive disorder and anxiety**
  - **27 or more lost workdays** annually per person experiencing these conditions
  - **Cost roughly \$250B annually**
- **Presenteeism** means workers are at work, but due to **depression are unable to fully function.**
  - **Depression accounted for 37% of all presenteeism losses** for the top 10 most expensive chronic conditions\*\*
  - **Cost roughly \$109 per employees**, with or without the condition
- Employer likely have 10 employees per 100 that are experiencing depression.
- Stress alone costs American companies **over \$300B** in health care costs, absenteeism and poor performance.
- **Roughly 40% of turnover is due to job stress.**

\* Chicago Resiliency Network

\*\* Tufts University



**Employers who invest in their employees' mental health and safety see a significant return on investment including improved employee satisfaction, increased productivity and reduced absenteeism and turnover.**

## THE GOOD NEWS

Employees who strongly agree that their employer cares about their overall wellbeing, including mental health, are:

**71%**

less likely to report experiencing a lot of burnout

**5x**

more likely to advocate for their employer as a place to work

**69%**

less likely to search for a new job

**3x**

more likely to be engaged at work

**36%**

more likely to be thriving in their lives



# What is Resilience?

- The ability, capacities, and relationships to manage and overcome adversity.
- Resilience is not binary; it can be built, particularly through recovering from toxic stress and trauma.
- By understanding toxic stress and trauma and their effects on the brain, we can transform them into resilience to fuel healing and success.



# WE CAN CHOOSE HOW TO RESPOND TO OUR BODY'S AUTOMATIC RESPONSES...

## Normal *automatic* bodily responses:

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Body aches
- Brain fog
- Confusion
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Fearful
- Fed up
- Feeling physically older
- Irritated
- Numb
- Untrusting



## Healthy behaviors and policies:

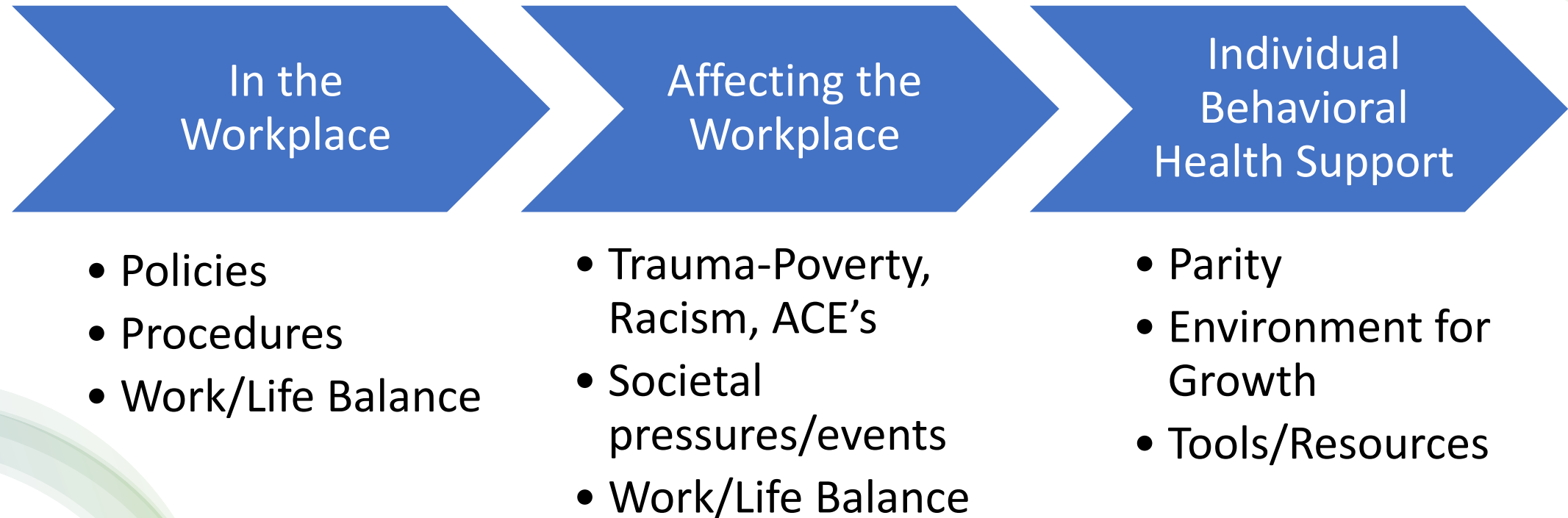
- Understanding the brain science
- Calm your brain, e.g., breathing, mindfulness
- Exercise
- Supportive organizational culture
- Community supports, e.g., affordable housing



## Unhealthy behaviors and policies:

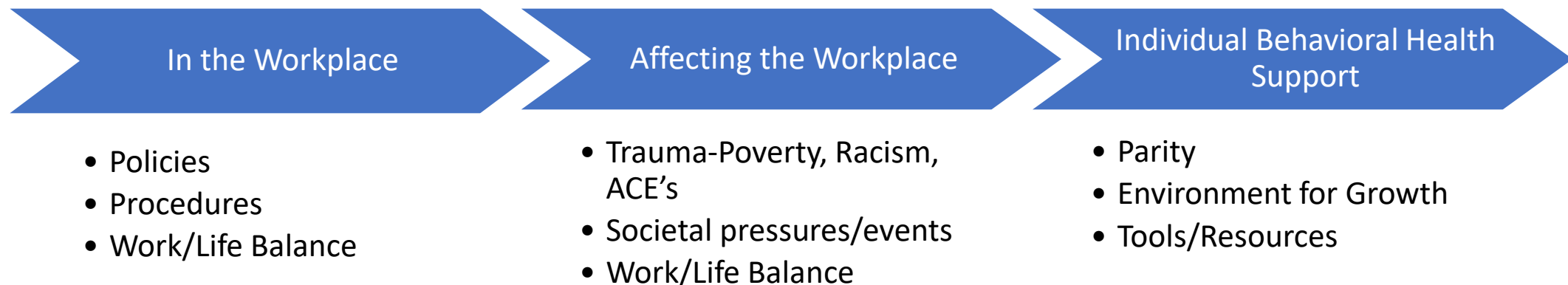
- Drinking and drug use
- Automatic punitive workplace policies
- Defunding and closing community health clinics

# Workplace and Non-Workplace Factors



# In the Workplace Stressors?

- Long hours
- Physically demanding
- Out of town
- Job insecurity
- Pressure to stay on schedule
- Impossible demands
- Tough-guy culture
- Discrimination / Harassment
- Interpersonal conflicts
- Gruff bosses
- No paid time off
- Time off for important events is difficult to get
- Lack of trust / respect by management
- No input into decisions
- No transparency
- Poor tools to do the job (slow / break down)
- Noise level
- Chaotic environment
- Serious consequence of failure (think surgeon)



# Five Steps to Start Building a Resilient Workplace

**01**

**Assess Your  
Workplace and  
Culture**

**02**

**Consider  
Workplace  
Policies,  
Practices and  
Procedures**

**03**

**Recommit to  
Employee  
Assistance  
Programs  
(EAPs)**

**04**

**Develop Ways  
to Engage and  
Empower  
Employees**

**05**

**Consider  
Adding Mental  
Health to Joint  
Employer/  
Employee  
Safety  
Committees**

# Suicide Prevention

- Working on anxiety and stress IS working on suicide prevention. It is addressing some of the root causes.
  - Recognizing people at risk for suicide is the next step
1. Talking about:
    - Wanting to die
    - Great guilt or shame
    - Being a burden to others
  2. Feeling:
    - Empty, hopeless, trapped, or having no reason to live
    - Extremely sad, more anxious, agitated, or full of rage
    - Unbearable emotional or physical pain



# Suicide Prevention

3. Changing behavior, such as:
  - Making a plan or researching ways to die
  - Withdrawing from friends, saying goodbye, giving away important items, or making a will
  - Taking dangerous risks such as driving extremely fast
  - Displaying extreme mood swings
  - Eating or sleeping more or less
  - Using drugs or alcohol more often.

# If You Notice Something: Three R's

## Recognize

- That's the last 2 slides

## Respond

- Ask them “are you OK?” Follow up with something like “Really, I’m concerned, and I care”
- Ask them point blank “are you thinking about suicide?”
- Tell them: “You matter” “you are important, and people care about you”
- Express empathy – repeat back their feelings “I understand you’re hurting, you’re overwhelmed, you feel helpless, you’re so lonely” Whatever it is that they are saying.

## Refer

- If you are not trained beyond that, then guide them to help.
- Stay with them.

# Lifelines Are a Direction to Turn

- Call 988
- Chat at 988lifeline.org
- Text “hello” to 741741



- Can we cover Michigan with stickers?





**Investing in mental health and safety is critical to building strong workplaces, a strong workforce and strong communities.**

# Michigan.gov/leo/initiatives/mental-health-in-the-workplace



# Questions? Comments?

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11/22

Drawing will be Wednesday (4/16) at 11am.  
Must be present to win.

# Thank You



Protecting the safety and  
health of Michigan workers  
for 50 years.