OhioPHP

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Health and Well-being of Ohio's Healthcare Workers©

Executive Summary

Preliminary research completed by:

MIGHTY CROW

INTRODUCTION

In October of 2020, the Ohio Physicians Health Program (OhioPHP), in partnership with Mighty Crow Media, put forth a proposal to conduct a statewide assessment of lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic as it related to the impact the pandemic had on the health and well-being of healthcare professionals.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing challenges within our healthcare system for patients and for healthcare professionals. Fear, loss, lack of personal protective equipment, ongoing surges, and much more have impacted everyone in ways we cannot even begin to understand. Preexisting levels of stress and burnout were further elevated as healthcare professionals faced this unknown and ever-challenging pandemic. Recognizing the need to know more about how to support our healthcare professionals in these fields, especially as it relates to their emotional welfare, became readily apparent.

The OhioPHP received a grant from the Federation of State Medical Boards Foundation that supported the development of an online survey targeted at healthcare professionals across the state of Ohio to gauge their pandemic-related experiences, levels of stress, overall well-being, and knowledge and use of supportive resources. OhioPHP, in collaboration with 13 of Ohio's Professional Licensing Boards, deployed the survey in July 2021. Between July 7, 2021, and August 20, 2021, 13,532 professionals responded to the survey. This report provides an overview of these findings.

SUMMARY

This report summarizes data collected from 13,532 respondents via an online survey administered statewide between July 7, 2021 and August 20, 2021.

Male
20%

Female
76%

THE BOARDS REPRESENTING THE LARGEST NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

Ohio Board of Nursing

State Medical Board of Ohio

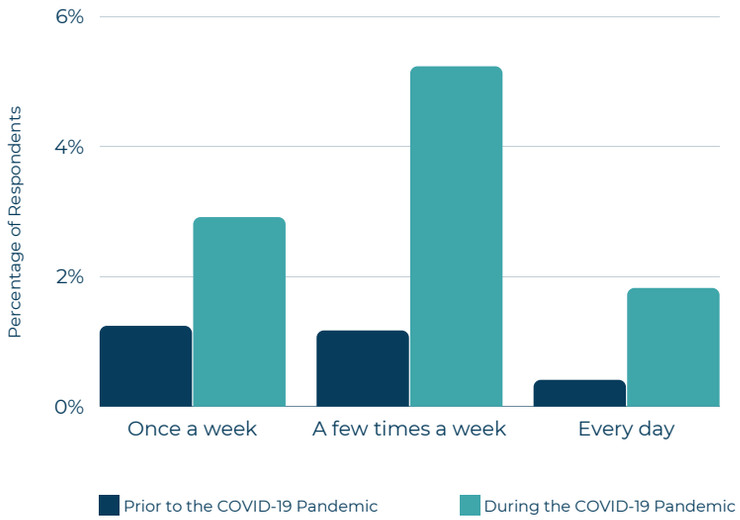
State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy

Ohio Counselor, Social Worker and Marriage and Family Therapist Board

BURNOUT AMONG OHIO'S HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Already a well-known issue among healthcare workers, burnout has dramatically accelerated during the pandemic. Far more workers reported feeling emotionally drained on a daily basis during the pandemic when compared to prior to the pandemic. Respondents were asked, “How often did you feel you did not really care what happens to patients?” Despite the essential nature of healthcare work, many professionals are finding less meaning in their jobs and felt apathetic while caring for patients.

APATHY TOWARDS PATIENTS



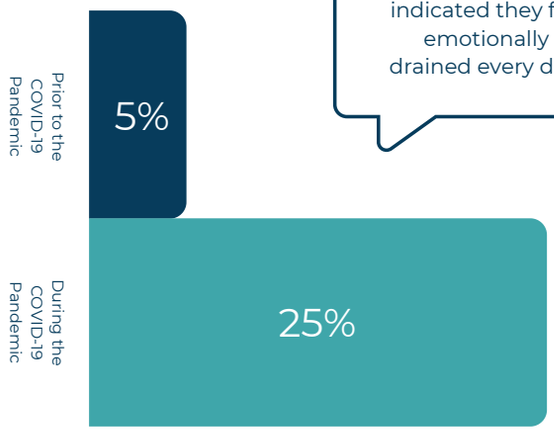
347%

increase in the number of healthcare professionals that reported not caring what happens to patients every day during the pandemic.

FEELING EMOTIONALLY DRAINED FROM WORK

367%

increase in the number of healthcare professionals that reported feeling emotionally drained every day during the pandemic.

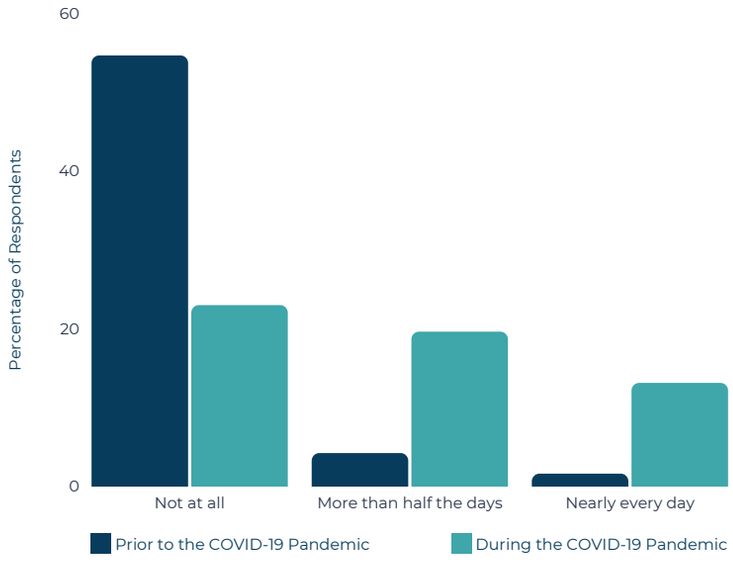


25% of Ohio's healthcare workers indicated they felt emotionally drained every day!

A LOOK INTO MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE

HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU FELT DOWN, DEPRESSED OR HOPELESS?

Survey respondents overwhelmingly indicated they had an exacerbation of feeling down, depressed, and hopeless. Many respondents also indicated more concern for their own use of alcohol and other substances during the pandemic and some reported an increase in thoughts of suicide.



THOUGHTS OF DEATH OR SUICIDE

Due to concerns about healthcare workers experiencing an exacerbation in mental health issues, we thought it was imperative to assess suicide risk. Thoughts of suicide for respondents increased from 3.07% prior to the pandemic to 5.76% during the pandemic.

INCREASES IN SUBSTANCE USE

Respondents' alcohol and other mood-altering substance use as a strategy for coping with work stress, burnout, compassion fatigue, etc., is of concern due to the negative impact it may have on one's mental health. 23% of respondents indicated an increase or significant increase in their substance use during the pandemic.

23%

of Healthcare professionals indicated that they had an *increase or significant increase* in their alcohol or substance use during the pandemic.

87.5%

Increase in thoughts of suicide among healthcare professionals in Ohio during the pandemic.

702%

increase in healthcare professionals feeling down, depressed, or hopeless (nearly every day) during the pandemic.

THE STATUS OF OHIO'S HEALTHCARE WORKER'S WELL-BEING

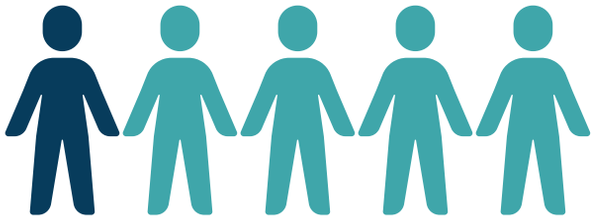
WELL-BEING ASSESSMENT

Survey respondents were asked about various stresses brought about by the pandemic. Our intention was to assess overall well-being and to see which factors played the biggest role in increasing the stress of healthcare workers.

Over 50% of respondents had an increase in their workload: 26% of respondents indicated their workload increased and 30% indicated it significantly increased during the pandemic.

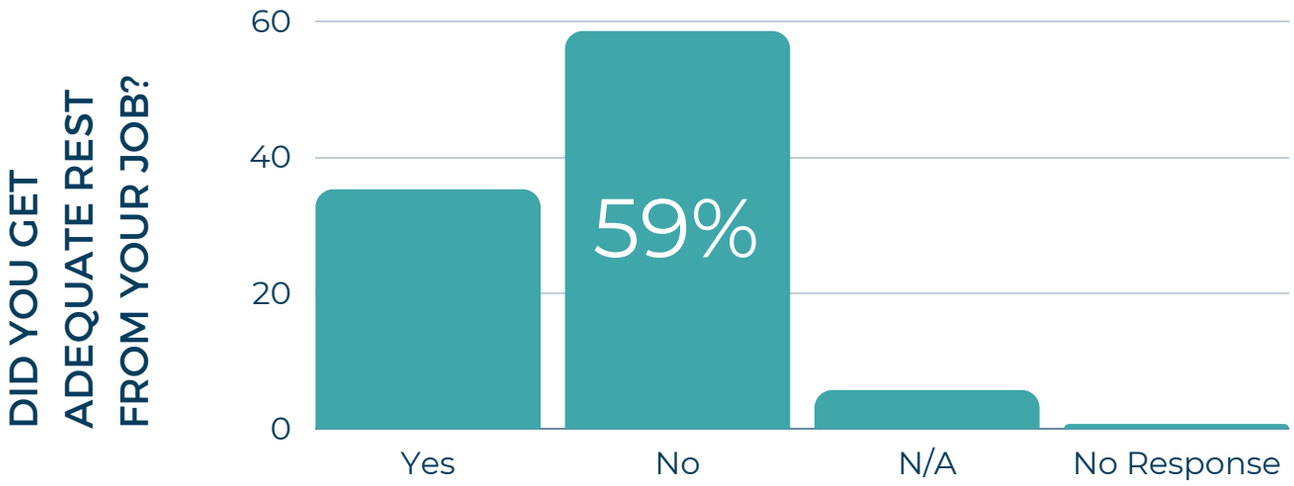
Respondents were also asked about stressors during the pandemic and to rate these stressors from 'not a stressor' to 'extreme stressor'. Some of the top significant or extreme stressors for healthcare professionals during the pandemic were: insufficient personal protective equipment (PPE); fears of spreading COVID-19; an inconsistent schedule in the workplace; lack of quality time with loved ones; and being too tired.

1 in 5



healthcare workers experienced unemployment, being furloughed, or laid off during the pandemic.

59% *of healthcare professionals indicated that "insufficient communication from leadership" was a stressor during the pandemic.*



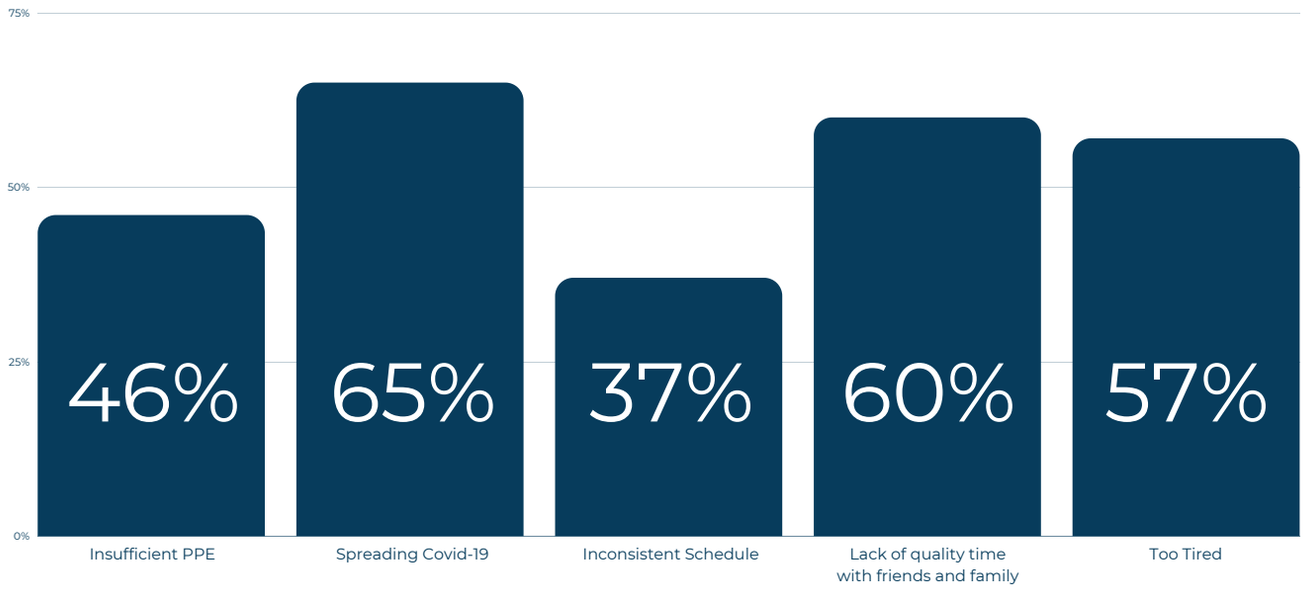
56%

of healthcare workers surveyed indicated their workload increased during the pandemic.

30%

of respondents stated their workload *SIGNIFICANTLY* increased during the pandemic.

STRESSORS DURING THE PANDEMIC



RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

OhioPHP supports the health and wellness of healthcare professionals to enhance patient care and safety through connection to resources and services. OhioPHP aims for healthcare professionals to receive confidential and compassionate support to improve their health and well-being. Survey results provided insight into how few professionals accessed such support despite indicating mental health concerns.

Survey data indicated that healthcare providers are exhausted both physically and mentally. They are stressed both at work and home. Survey respondents indicated an increase in depression and hopelessness during the pandemic as well as thoughts of suicide and concerns about substance use. Yet only 1 in 4 sought emotional or mental health support.

Only 1 in 4 healthcare professionals sought *emotional support during the pandemic.*

OBSTACLES TO SEEKING SUPPORT

Respondents who indicated that they did not seek emotional services during the pandemic were asked to identify obstacles to seeking assistances. Below are examples of obstacles identified.

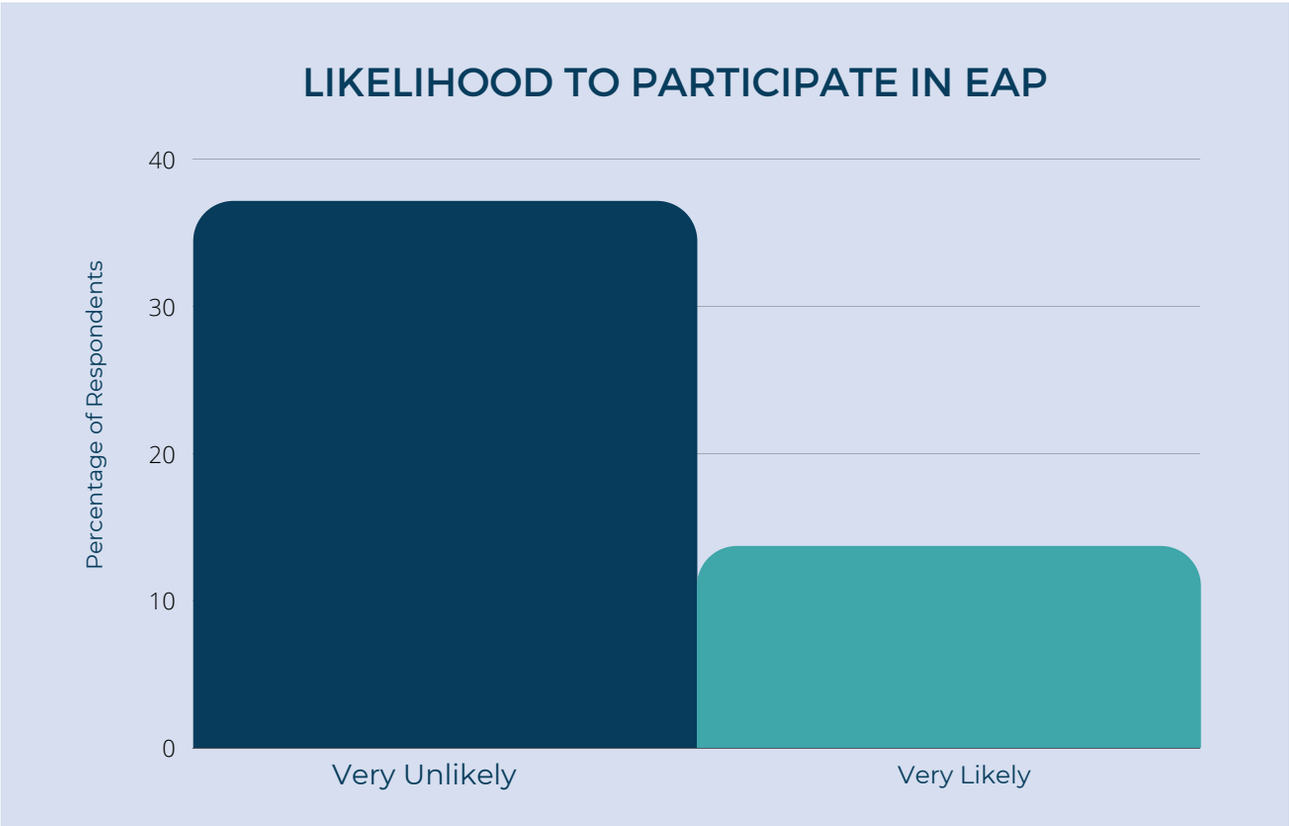
56%
Time Commitment

40%
Did not know where to turn for support

31%
Confidentiality concerns

LIKELIHOOD TO PARTICIPATE

Respondents were asked, “Does your workplace offer a program to address mental health concerns (e.g., Employee Assistance Program [EAP])?” More than half (51%) of respondents indicated that their workplace did offer a program, while 30% indicated their workplace did not.



IN CONCLUSION

As expected, overall well-being worsened during the pandemic. But data shows that many healthcare professionals were already experiencing significant health and well-being challenges prior to the pandemic. We hope these findings can be used to find ways to support and improve the lives of healthcare professionals during both pandemic and non-pandemic times.

NEXT STEPS

Where do we go from here? This data is a direct response from the healthcare professionals in our own backyards here in Ohio, our friends, our family members, our peers. ***Now is the time to act.***

OhioPHP has been serving healthcare professionals for over 40 years. We have seen firsthand the positive impact safe, supportive, and confidential services have on the health and well-being of Ohio's healthcare professionals. We must not sit idly by as we now have heard directly from the healthcare workers in Ohio about how much they are and have been struggling with burnout, anxiety, and mental health. Below you will find OhioPHP's next steps to addressing this growing problem and how you can get involved.

01

Develop Safe Haven Programs

Confidential safe haven programs should be created by every healthcare licensing board. We believe at OhioPHP that every healthcare professional should have access to these crucial programs.

02

Distribute Data Far and Wide

For the first time ever, we have current data about ALL healthcare professionals in Ohio. We must spread this information to as many corners of the state as possible in order to make lasting and impactful change.

03

Continue the research

This report is one of many you will see over the next several years. We are actively fundraising to continue this research. With over 13,000 responses, we still have much more data to provide with even more insights into how best to support our healthcare workers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We must thank those who worked tirelessly on this project and afforded us the ability to collect and capture the stories of Ohio's healthcare workers.

OhioPHP's Board of Directors

Our Funders

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And a special thanks to our researchers at Mighty Crow Media:

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Rebecca J. McCloskey, PhD, MSW, LISW-S
Kathleen Gallant, BA

Without you, this would not be possible.

CONTACT

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Supporting Ohio's Healthcare Professionals since 1995