





## Abstract

Poor mental health has a significant negative impact on the US economy, costing \$193.2 billion annually, and increasing the risk of suicide. There are more than ten million construction workers in the United States, and prior research has shown that their mental health is often neglected, making them more susceptible to substance misuse, drug overdose, and suicide than workers in other industries.

We undertook the present study to review the literature about mental health of construction workers, conduct a survey to assess and identify mental health issues/concerns among construction workers, and develop recommended organizational and individual worker-level responses for mental health issues. Our literature review indicated that 10.7% of the world's population is affected by at least one type of mental health disorder, which increases the risk of suicide and has costly consequences for workers, families, and employers. Furthermore, the review helped to comprehensively define mental health, inform the most appropriate measures for assessing mental health in a work context, and identify how organizations and societies have studied and addressed mental health globally.

After the literature review, the research team conducted a survey of a heterogeneous sample of construction workers in the U.S. to assess their mental health and well-being, with 143 workers completing the survey. Workers in the study reported indicators of poor mental health at a higher rate than previous studies. Work-related stress was strongly associated with various indicators of poor mental health, including anxiety, depression, and number of days of poor mental health.

These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to address specific work-related stressors and alleviate the strains associated with poor mental health. One potential intervention identified is leadership training, which operates at an organizational level and so can have a broad impact. Leadership can shape the organizational culture, establish supportive policies and procedures, and improve communication about mental health. Leadership training



## Introduction

### Project Significance

The construction industry in the United States significantly contribut





oversampling lack accuracy when it comes to race/ethnicity-based or gender-based comparisons (Curtis et al., 2018; Jacobsen et al., 2013; Turner & Lingard, 2020). Therefore, It is imperative to implement



get construction companies to allow access to their workers proved difficult and to get them to encourage participation. This challenge of collecting data on site was compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. The research team considers it valuable to include the lessons from this process in this report, as they provide

By combining a literature review and a comprehensive survey the research team aimed to gather a holistic understanding of the mental health landscape among construction workers, exploring workplace factors, health status, socioeconomic influences, and participant demographics.

### Literature

The research team's extensive literature review explored the following issues in detail:

- The mental health indicators/issues and the associated statistics in the construction industry.
- The different qualitative and quantitative data on the different mental health issues such as suicide rates, substance misuse, drug overdose, alcohol misuse, accidents, and health conditions among many other mental health issues, and their statistics.
- The initiatives and efforts that have been taken locally, nationally, and globally to address mental health issues in general, and specifically in the construction industry.
- The literature and data on gender and ethnicity-specific mental health issues as it is essential to understand specific population vulnerabilities.

### Survey Tool

The research team developed a survey tool to explore the following issues in detail:



Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by little interest or pleasure in doing things?

Not at all	47.1%
Several days	42.9%
More than half the days	7.6%
Nearly every day	

compared to those who did not participate.

The preliminary findings also indicated that work-related stress is strongly associated with multiple indicators of poor mental health, including symptoms of anxiety and depression and number of days experiencing poor mental health. These results call for a more fine-grained analysis to investigate specific work-related stressors that will help guide more specific recommendations for work-related interventions to help ameliorate strains linked to poor mental health.

Improving construction worker mental health calls for intervention. In general, occupational health interventions operate at primary, secondary, or tertiary levels based on the extent to which individuals have experienced or may be at risk for or likely to have poor mental health. Primary interventions focus on preventing stressors and negative consequences (e.g., poor mental health) from the outset and are most effective. Secondary interventions are implemented among those suspected to be at risk but prior to experiencing negative consequences (e.g., poor mental health). Tertiary interventions are for those who already have experienced negative consequences, such as workers who report poor mental health.

Our first recommendation is for leadership training to support construction worker mental health. One benefit of leadership training is that it is an organizational-level intervention, which can have greater



## Presentations

Mehany, M. and Kumar, S. Status of Mental Health of Construction Workers in the US Construction Industry. Poster Presentation, Associated Schools of Construction (ASC) 58th Annual ASC International Conference, April 20-23, 2022, Atlanta, GA, USA.

Mehany, M., Kumar, S., & Fisher, G. G. Mental health and well-being among construction workers. Poster to be presented at the APA/NIOSH/SOHP Work, Stress, and Health Conference, November 8-11, 2023, Miami, FL.

## Publications In Progress

Mehany, M., Kumar, S., & Fisher, G.G. – Literature review – To be submitted 2023

Mehany, M., Fisher, G. G. & Kumar, S. - Work characteristics, mental health, and well-being in the construction industry. Manuscript in preparation for submission 2023.

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