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Mining and Energy Union psychosocial hazards survey key results

Introduction

The Mining and Energy Union Queensland District held a survey of mine workers in Queensland to identify overall trends regarding attitudes to and awareness of psychosocial hazards.

The survey was opened on Wednesday 26 July and closed on Monday 31 August.

Who took the survey

- The majority of respondents (87.3%) have worked in the mining industry for over five years.
- The majority of respondents work in an open-cut mine (76.4%)
- Around 1 in 5 (18.42%) of respondents work in an underground mine
- The majority of respondents were full-time direct employees, although 15.6% of respondents were labour hire or contractors

Awareness of psychosocial hazards in the workplace

- Around 70% of workers had never heard the term 'psychosocial hazards' being used in their workplace with around 10% being unsure.

The survey asked if respondents had ever experienced physical, mental or emotional distress in the mining industry:

Experience	Rate of people who had experienced this
Bullying	24.7%
Harassment	17.0%
Violence and/or aggression	4.7%
Exposure to traumatic events	11.2%
Physical or social isolation	8.2%
Too much, too little or inappropriate work	7.5%

Note: Respondents were only able to select one experience. Many respondents noted that they had experienced multiple of these occurrences.

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- Women experienced higher rates of distressing activities during their time in the mining industry. For example, women experienced bullying at higher rates (29.29%).

"We get verbally abused for stuff we don't do. It gets morale down in the crew." – **Female worker, (permanent employee, open-cut mine, aged 55+)**

"As a contractor at times we're constantly reminded how vulnerable our position is. And even worse spoken down to by the permanent employees." - **Male worker (labour hire, underground, aged 35 – 54)**

"Management attempting to force taking of leave entitlements outside of the leave policy guidelines." - **Male worker (permanent employee, open-cut mine, aged 35 – 54)**

The survey asked if respondents had experienced physical, mental or emotional distress in the mining industry in the last twelve months:

Experience	Rate of people had experienced this
Bullying	19.9%
Harassment	19.7%
Violence and/or aggression	2.8%
Exposure to traumatic events	6.3%
Physical or social isolation	11.4%
Too much, too little or inappropriate work	15.0%

Note: Respondents were only able to select one experience. Many respondents noted that they had experienced multiple of these occurrences.

"Yes was labour hire for six years and was rejected for a permanent position twice - quite a psychological damaging experience. I was clearly experienced for the position I was essentially applying for my own job the position I currently held and continued in that position for 5 years even though I was apparently not good enough, a form of gaslighting." - **Male worker (labour hire, open-cut mine, aged 55+)**

"Safety first until inconvenient." - **Male worker (direct employee, underground mine, aged 55+)**

Direct supervisors and colleagues were reportedly most responsible for distressing circumstances

- When asked who was mainly responsible for the distressing circumstances, respondents around 1 in 3 (34.5%) said that it was their direct supervisor
- Around 1 in 4 (26%) said that distressing circumstances were a result of either a workmate on their crew or other works on site and for women, this number increased to (46.3%).

"Executive level management applying pressure to Senior managers to meet ambiguous KPI's which is passed on down the line. Currently my direct supervisor does not understand how real leadership

*works and just passes on this pressure and unrealistic/ unachievable workload.” - **Male worker (direct employee, power station, aged 35 – 54)***

Psychological hazards affect workers' home life and cause alarming symptoms

- When asked if stress at work had affected their home life, a majority of workers (60.5%) said that it had
- Respondents have also reported alarming rates of symptoms as a result of circumstances at work:
 - Nearly 1 in 5 (17.4%) reporting feelings of depression
 - Nearly 1 in 3 (29.1%) reporting feelings of anxiety
 - Around 1 in 4 (24.6%) reporting sleeplessness
- Women noted higher rates of depression (16.1%) and anxiety (41.4%)
- While in smaller numbers, alarmingly 1 in 20 (4.7%) reported having suicidal thoughts (2.3%) and post-traumatic stress disorder (2.5%)
- Note: Respondents were only able to select one experience. Many respondents noted that they had experienced multiple of these occurrences.

*“Lack of sleep, not being social, consistently questioning myself worth.” - **Male worker (direct employee, open-cut mine, aged 35 – 54)***

*“Bullied so bad by my supervisor, I wanted to kill myself.” - **Female worker (contractor, open cut mine, aged 18 – 34)***

*“I quit my job and was unwell... anxiety and depression.” - **Male worker (contractor, open-cut mine, aged 55+)***

*“I'm feeling attacked all the time and stressed out all the time I cry nearly every day. - **Female worker (contractor, open cut mine, aged 35 – 54)***

Only 1% of workers sought support from their employer/ HR

- Nearly half of respondents who experienced distressing circumstances at work (44.7%) did not support
- Around 40% of those who had experienced circumstances at work sought support.
- Respondents most commonly sought support from their doctor (18.3%), an Employee Assistance Program (12.8%) or counsellor/ psychologist (12.2%)
- Only around 1% of workers sought support from their employer representative/ HR.

Workers don't trust their employers to support the psychological safety of workers

- The majority of respondents said that their employer does not take adequate steps to support the psychological safety of workers (53.5%) with around 1 in 4 (25.4%) saying they were unsure.

- Additionally, the majority of respondents do not believe (45.9%) or are unsure (31.3%) whether employer programs or processes at their workplace to support workers' psychological safety are appropriately confidential.
- 1 in 2 workers do not believe that employer programs or processes at your workplace to support workers' psychological safety protect workers against reprisals.

Workers are considering leaving their jobs due to psychosocial hazards

- The majority of workers have considered leaving their job due to work-related psychological or emotional distress
- 52.8% of respondents said they had considered it
- 18.3% saying they may have considered it
- Women reported higher rates of considering leaving their job, with 60.2% of women saying they had considered leaving their job.