

Media Release

Nearly a quarter of working Australian women are experiencing a mental health condition

- Over half (55%) of women in the workforce have experienced a mental health condition in their lifetime
- Younger women (18-24 years) have the highest incidence of mental health conditions
- Women are more likely to experience workplace bullying and a lack of flexibility when needed than men

Melbourne, 8 March 2019: Working Australian women are far more likely than men to experience a mental health condition in their lifetime. According to research from SuperFriend, the workplace mental health and wellbeing partner for the superannuation and insurance industry, more than two thirds (68%) of women experience a mental health condition before the age of 25.

[The Gender Identity Report](#), a snapshot taken from SuperFriend's annual [Indicators of a Thriving Workplace](#) survey of more than 5000 Australian workers, found almost a quarter of women (24%) are currently experiencing a mental health condition, significantly higher than men (15%).

Women also reported higher incidences of workplace mental health issues including bullying (26%), work-related insomnia (23%) and a lack of flexible work arrangements when required (23%).

Commenting on the findings, SuperFriend CEO, Margo Lydon, a Victorian finalist in the 2019 Telstra Women's Business Award For Purpose and Social Enterprise, said: "What we found is that mental health remains a significant issue for working Australian women.

"While employee wellbeing has been rising up the agenda for many organisations, these findings show that there is still a long way to go in creating happier, healthier workplaces for all, regardless of gender."



Optimism and retention lower for women

Overall, the report found that women were feeling less positive than men about their workplace.

Just 10% felt strongly optimistic that the state of mental health and wellbeing in their workplace would improve in the future, while more than half would not commit to staying with their current employer for another year.

In addition, women were less likely than men to strongly believe their employer was among the best in its industry at creating and sustaining positive mental health for employees.

“What is clear from these findings is that the gender gap is still an issue in many organisations,” Ms Lydon said.

“Overall, we found women had very different workplace experiences to men, perhaps because men are more heavily represented in senior management roles with a higher share of voice in workplace policies and practices.

“This highlights some clear opportunities for organisations to better engage their female employees and take positive steps to improve their workplace experiences.”

Improving productivity and positivity for women in the workplace

Women believe lack of time is the biggest barrier to employers improving mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. This perception is supported by the belief that there is a lack of understanding about these issues and that their employers have more important business issues to address.

However, women are far more likely than men to identify and articulate how they would personally benefit from mentally healthy workplaces.

Some 68% of women said improved practices would increase their feelings of being valued, 61% said they would have a greater ability to bring their ‘best self’ to work and 57% said they would have an increased commitment to the organisation.

“At a time when gender equality, workplace relations and attracting and retaining women across all industries is of key importance, there are many steps organisations can take to make their workplaces more inclusive.



“Some of these include having qualified female candidates on shortlists for management roles even if they’re on parental leave, improving return to work policies, analysing like-for-like gender pay gaps and offering greater flexibility regardless of gender to help achieve work-life balance.

“The most successful organisations today are the ones that are committed to diversity and inclusion and creating an environment in which all employees can thrive.”

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About SuperFriend

SuperFriend focuses on creating positive, healthy and safe working environments where every employee can be well and thrive. Our vision is for an Australia where all workplaces are mentally healthy.

SuperFriend works with all 'profit to member' superannuation funds to promote and support improved mental health and wellbeing for their members, through the workplace. SuperFriend collaborates with all profit to member funds, group insurers and the mental health sector to develop the capacity and capability of its partner funds and insurers and advocates for policy and practice change to improve mental health outcomes for all working Australians.

