



NPOwer Mental Health Support Programme: Survey Findings & Recommendations

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Mental health in South Africa

- Rates of psychiatric disorders among highest in sub-Saharan Africa
- Only 27% of severe cases treated
- Low medical insurance access (16%)
- 3 public psychiatrists per 1 million uninsured people
- Overburdened and under-resourced healthcare system

SUNDAY TIMES (First Edition)
06 Jul 2014, p.1

SA's sick state of mental health

One-third of our population suffers from mental illnesses – and 75% of them will not receive treatment

BEAUREGARD TROMP,
CARYN DOLLEY,
MONICA LAGANPARSAD and
SUTHENTIRA GOVENDER

A SPECIAL Sunday Times investigation has uncovered the shocking state of mental health

**SUNDAY
TIMES
EXCLUSIVE**

professionals such as psychiatrists, psychologists and psychiatric nurses.

Only 1% of beds in psychiatric wards are reserved for children or adolescents, which results in a one-month wait for a place and leaves youngsters like 17-year-



COVID-19 in South Africa



COVID-19 in South Africa

- 5 March 2020 – First confirmed case of COVID-19
 - 26 March 2020 – South African Lockdown commenced
- High rates of pre-existing comorbidities (NCDs, HIV: 20.4%)
- Elevated rates of poverty (55.5%) and unemployment (29%)

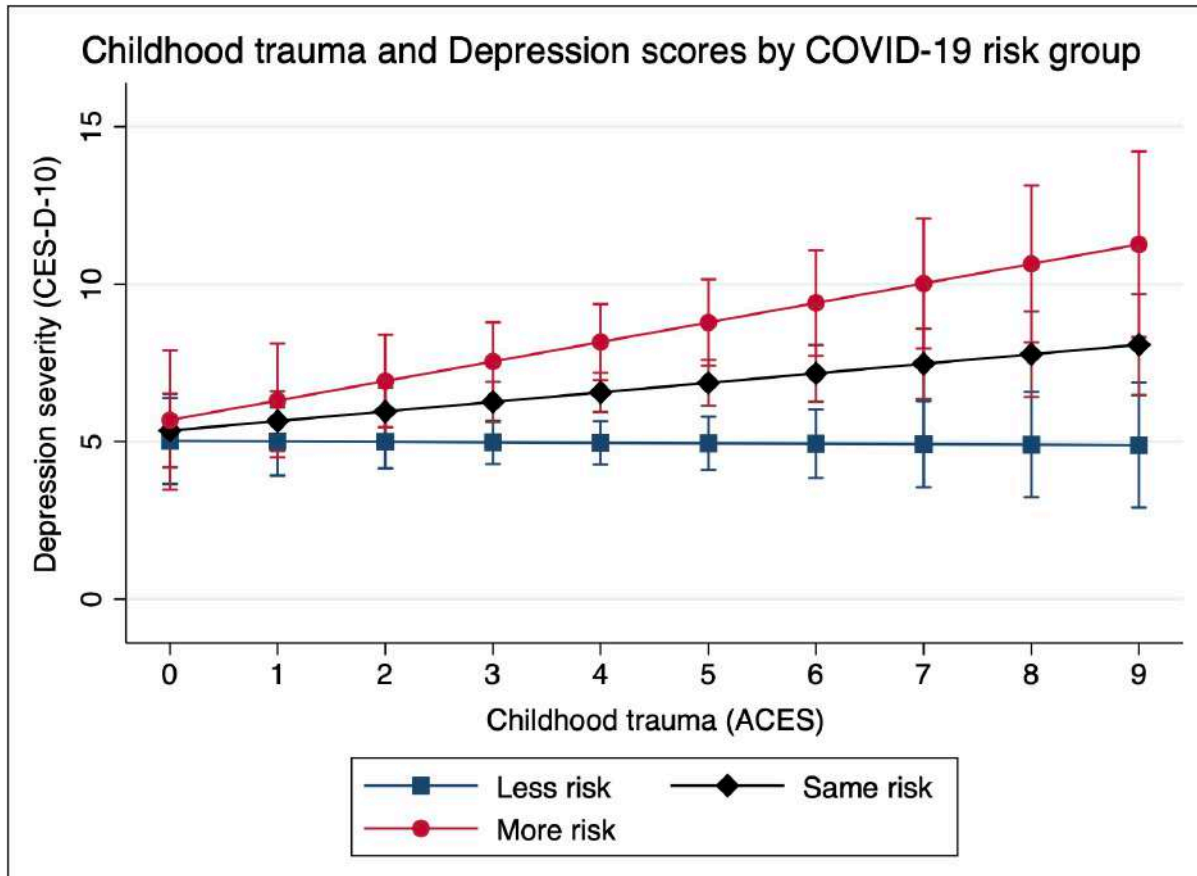


South Africa's ruthlessly efficient fight against coronavirus

Mental health during COVID-19

- Quarantine exacerbates existing economic and social conditions
- Inability to social distance/quarantine
- Adverse social conditions in lockdown
- Harsh enforcement of government sanctions
- Drug default, lower adherence, relapse among mental healthcare users
- Neuro/psychiatric sequelae of COVID-19 infection

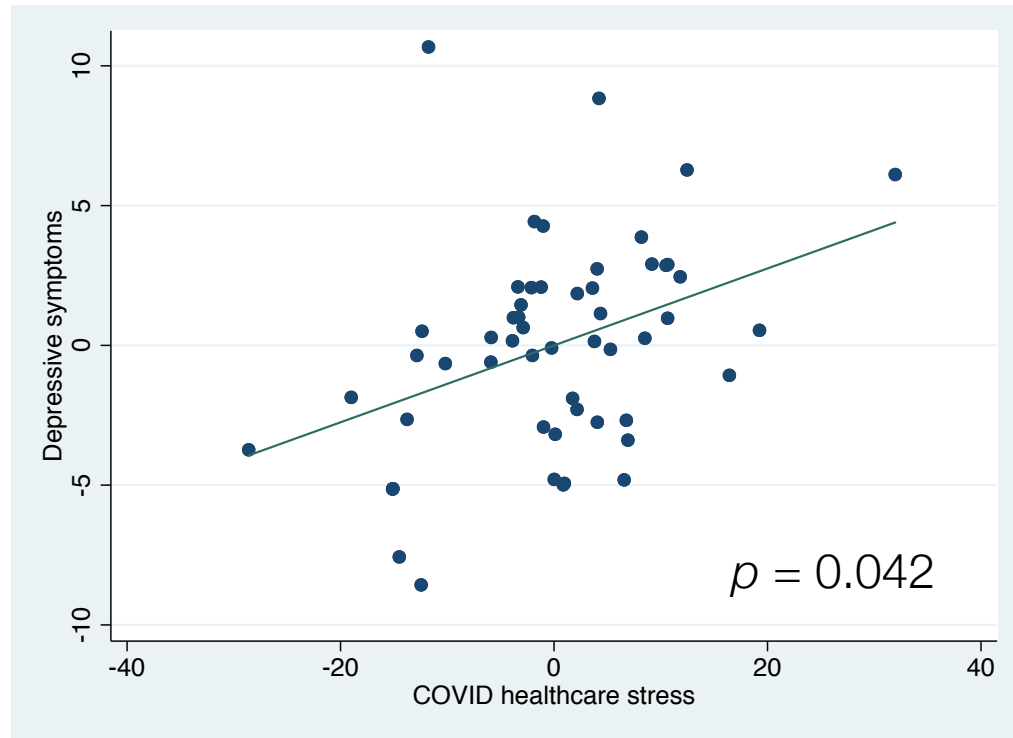
Evaluating the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic: perceived risk of COVID-19 infection and childhood trauma predict adult depressive symptoms in urban South Africa



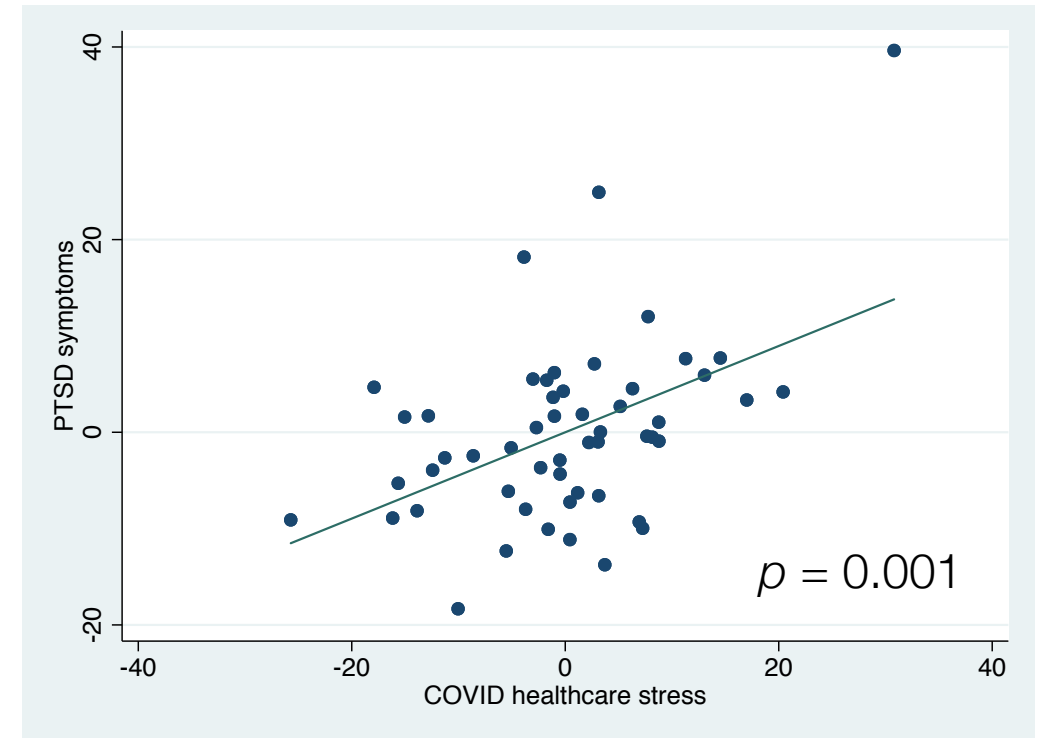
Higher perceived risk of COVID-19 infection is associated with greater depressive symptoms among adults with histories of childhood trauma ($p = 0.062$)

Kim et al. (2020). *Psychological Medicine*

Elevated psychiatric risk in healthcare workers



COVID healthcare stress predicts worse depressive symptoms ($\beta = .12$, $p = 0.042$, 95% CI: [0.0046, 0.23])



COVID healthcare stress predicts worse PTSD symptoms ($\beta = .40$, $p = 0.004$, 95% CI: [0.133, 0.663])

MAVERICK CITIZEN

Spotlight needs to remain on South Africa's food security crisis, say NGOs fighting hunger

By Zukiswa Pikoli • 25 May 2021



Early Breakfast with Africa Melane (Archive)

NGO community under strain due to struggling economy and COVID-19

00:00 / 08:18

SA's emergency response to gender-based violence: How urgent is urgent?

City Press Nthabiseng Moleko

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NPOwer
Supporting the mental health of South African NPOs

Tshikululu SADAG NPO Support Helpline:
0800 515 515
SMS number 43010

 @Npowersa |  @npowersa
 www.npowersa.org

NPOwer Mental Health Support Programme

- Psychological first aid for NPO leaders, staff and volunteers,
- Assess and address stress and burnout from COVID-19
- Strengthening advocacy and capacity amongst the NPO sector



I. Containment-based telephonic counselling



II. Online survey on health and experiences



Data collection methodology

- Survey co-designed by SADAG and Tshikululu
- Disseminated between October 2020 - March 2021
- Assessments:
 - Demographics
 - Size and capacity of organization
 - Stress levels
 - Psychological disease risk
- Qualitative data from call logs: stress, needs, resources

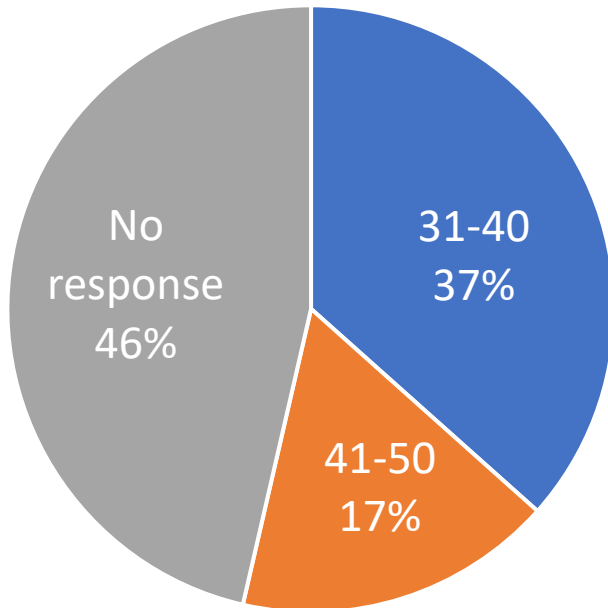


Results

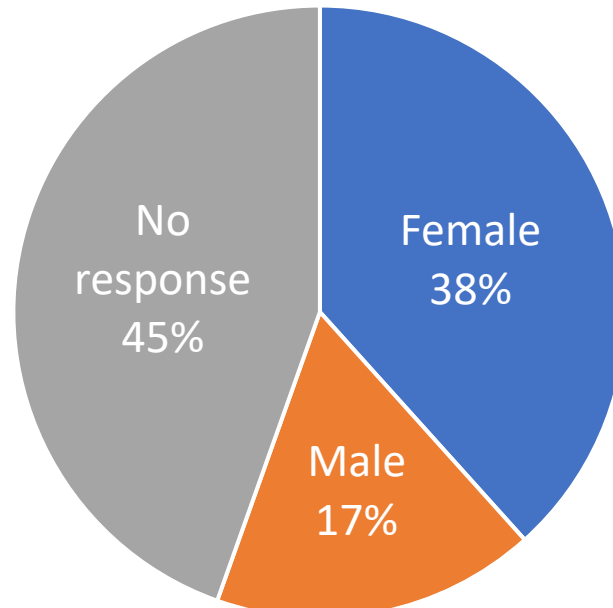
I. NGO characteristics

Who completed the survey?

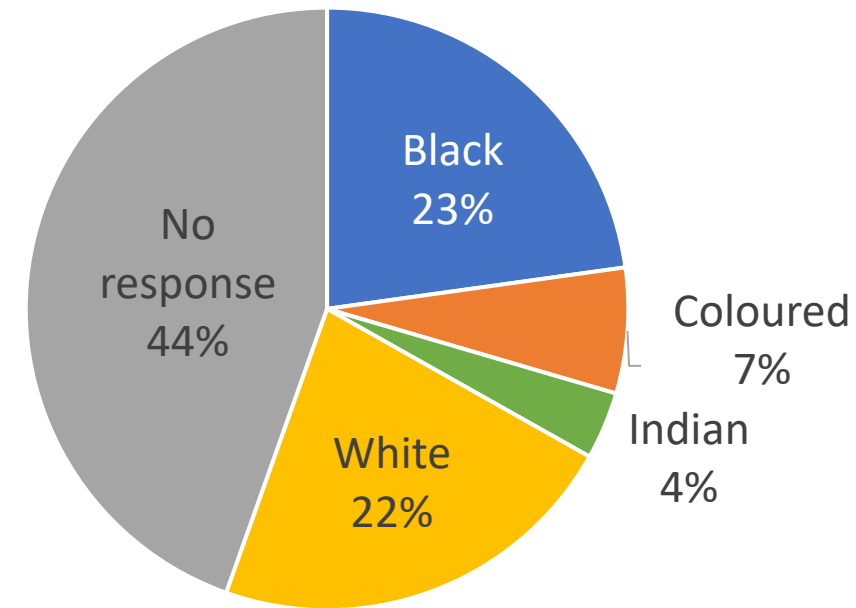
Age



Gender

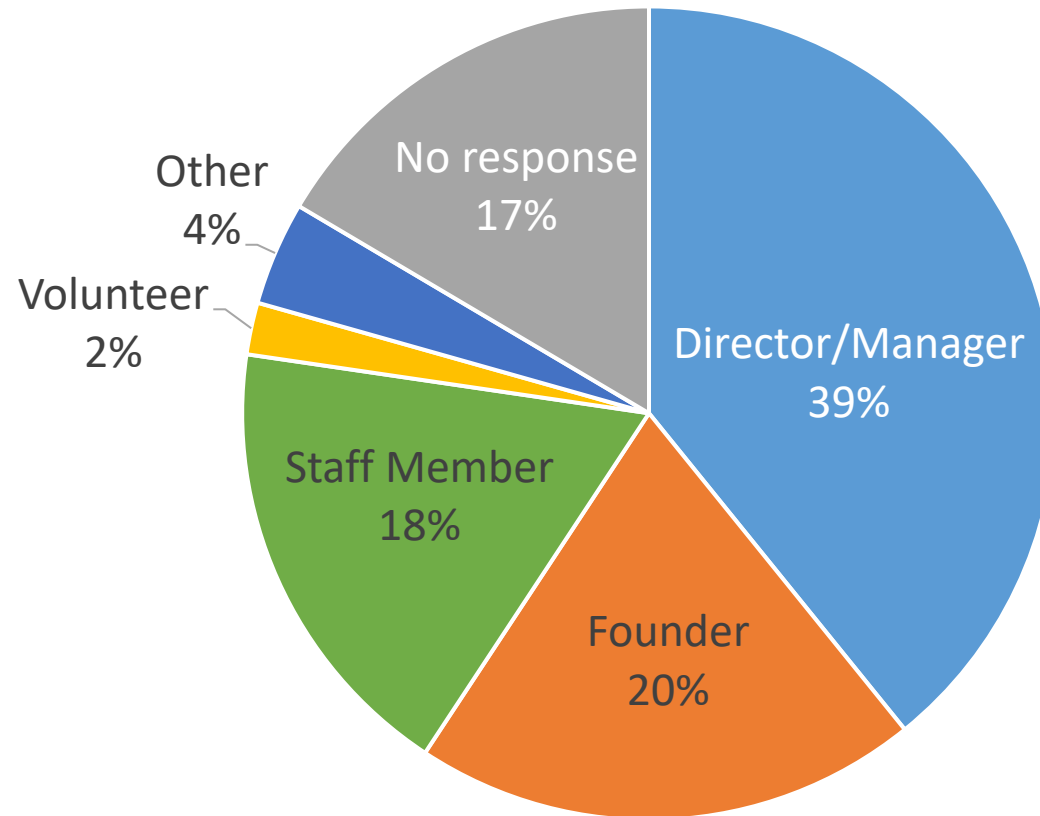


Racial Group



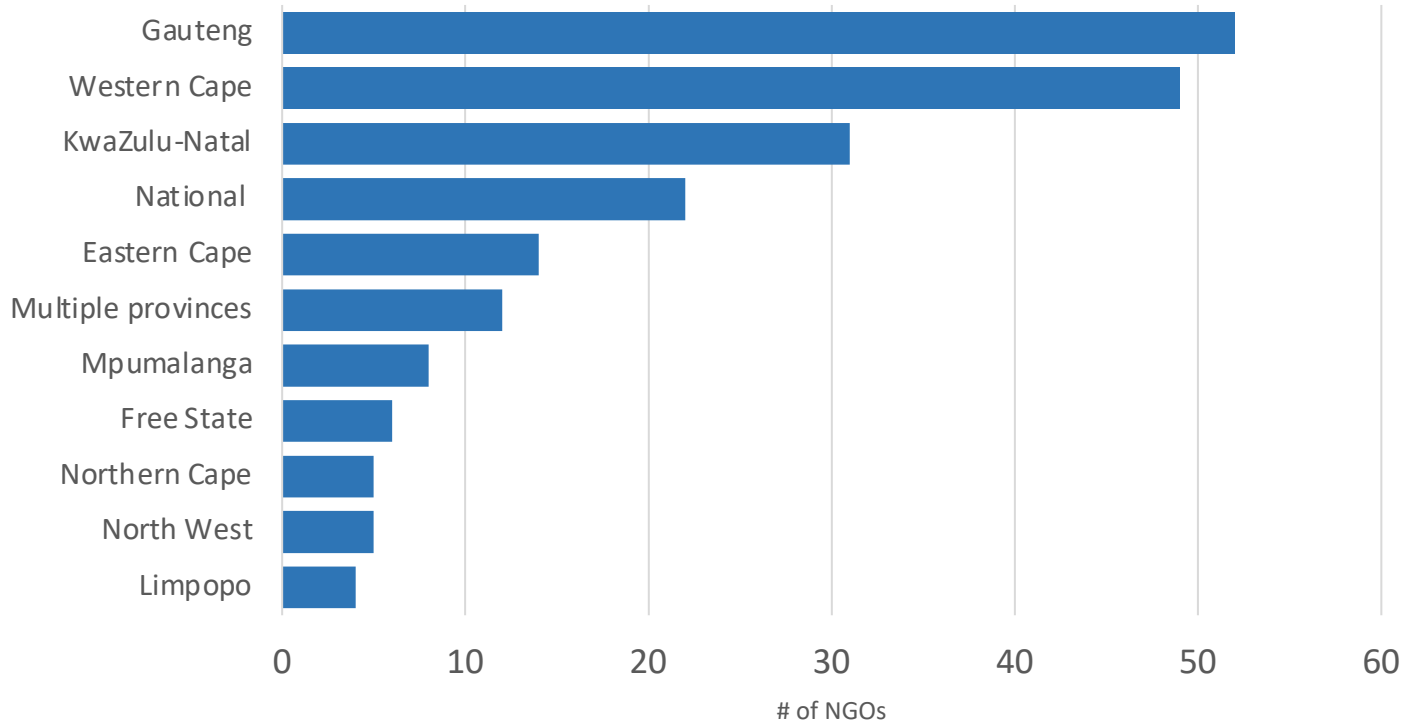
Who completed the survey?

Position of NGO survey respondent

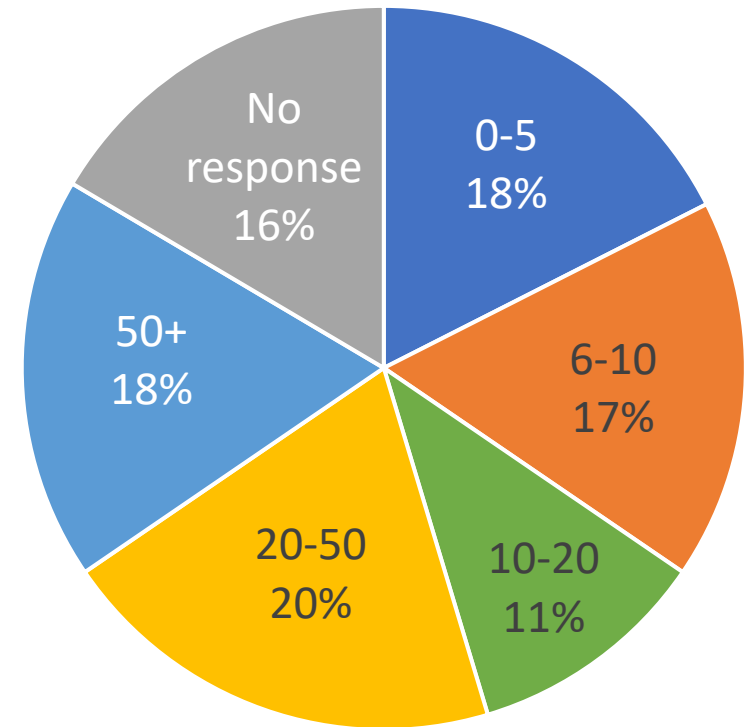


NGO characteristics

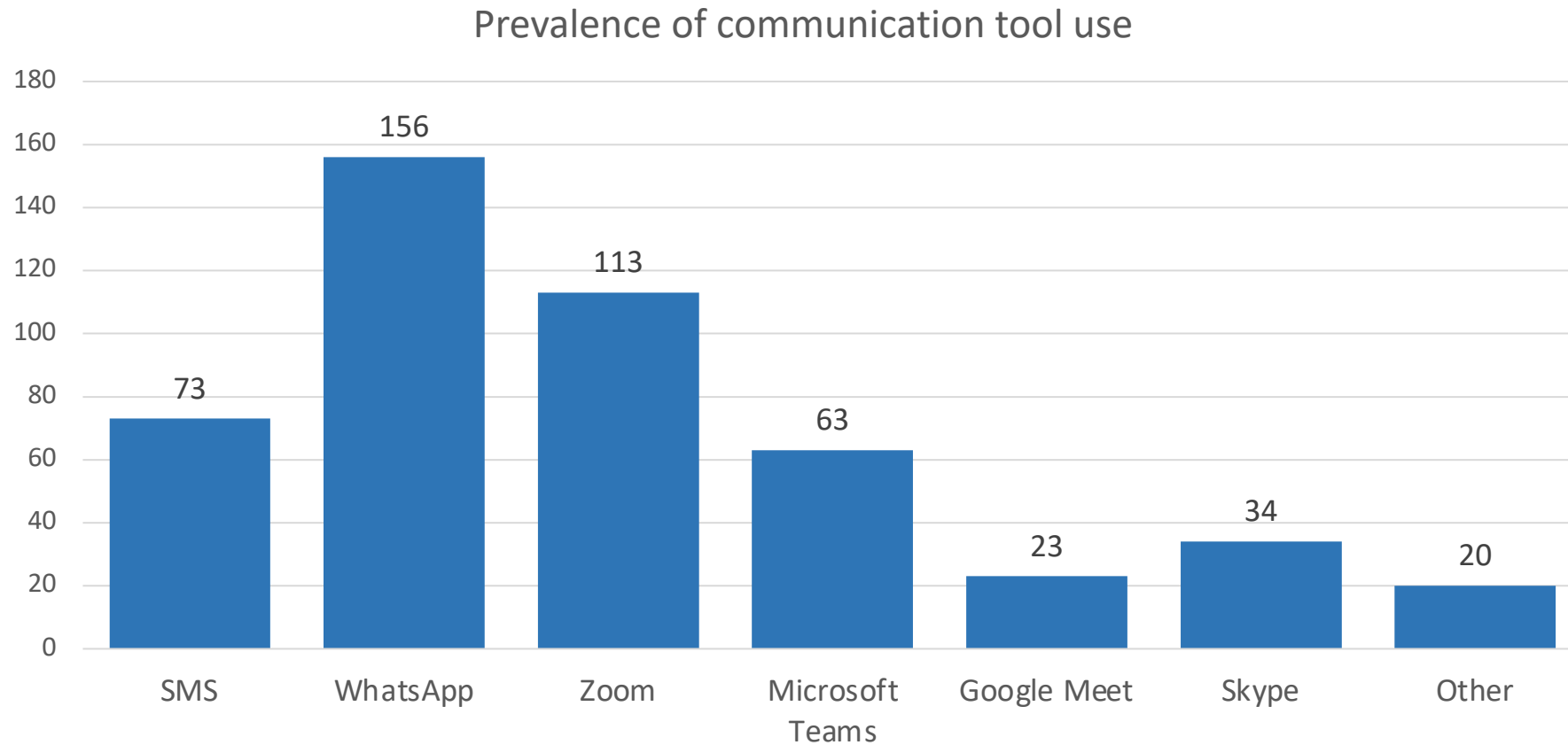
Location of NGOs by Province



Staff size of NGOs



Modes of communication



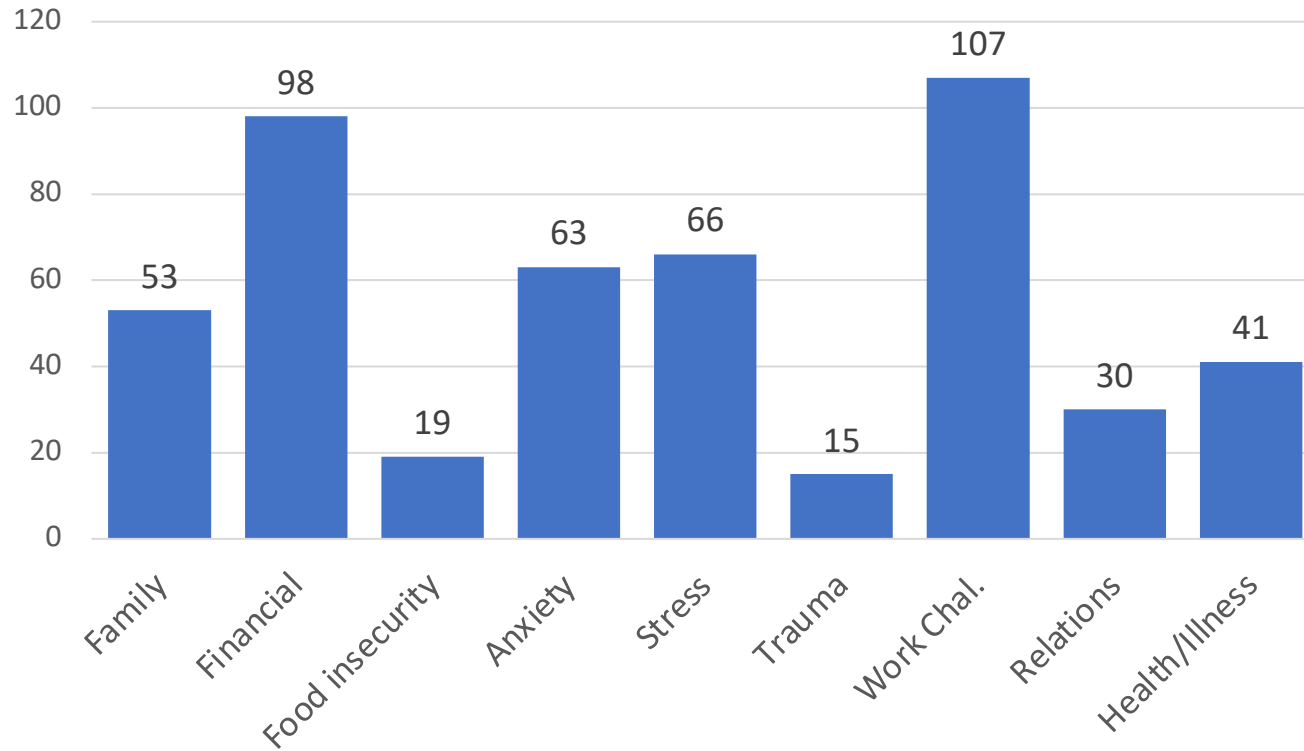


Results

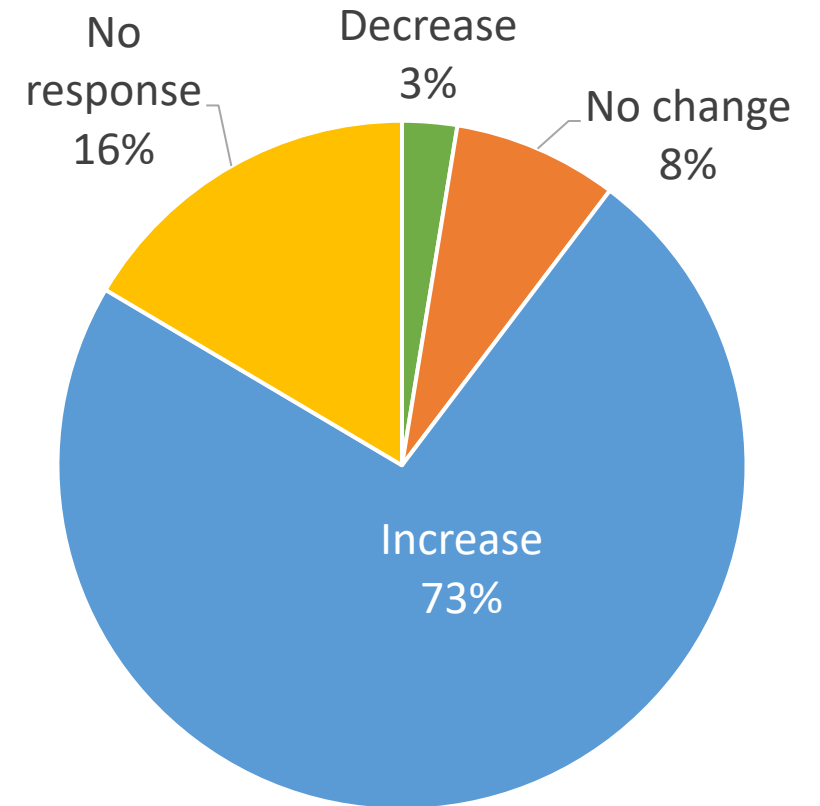
II. Stress and mental health

Experiences of stress during COVID-19

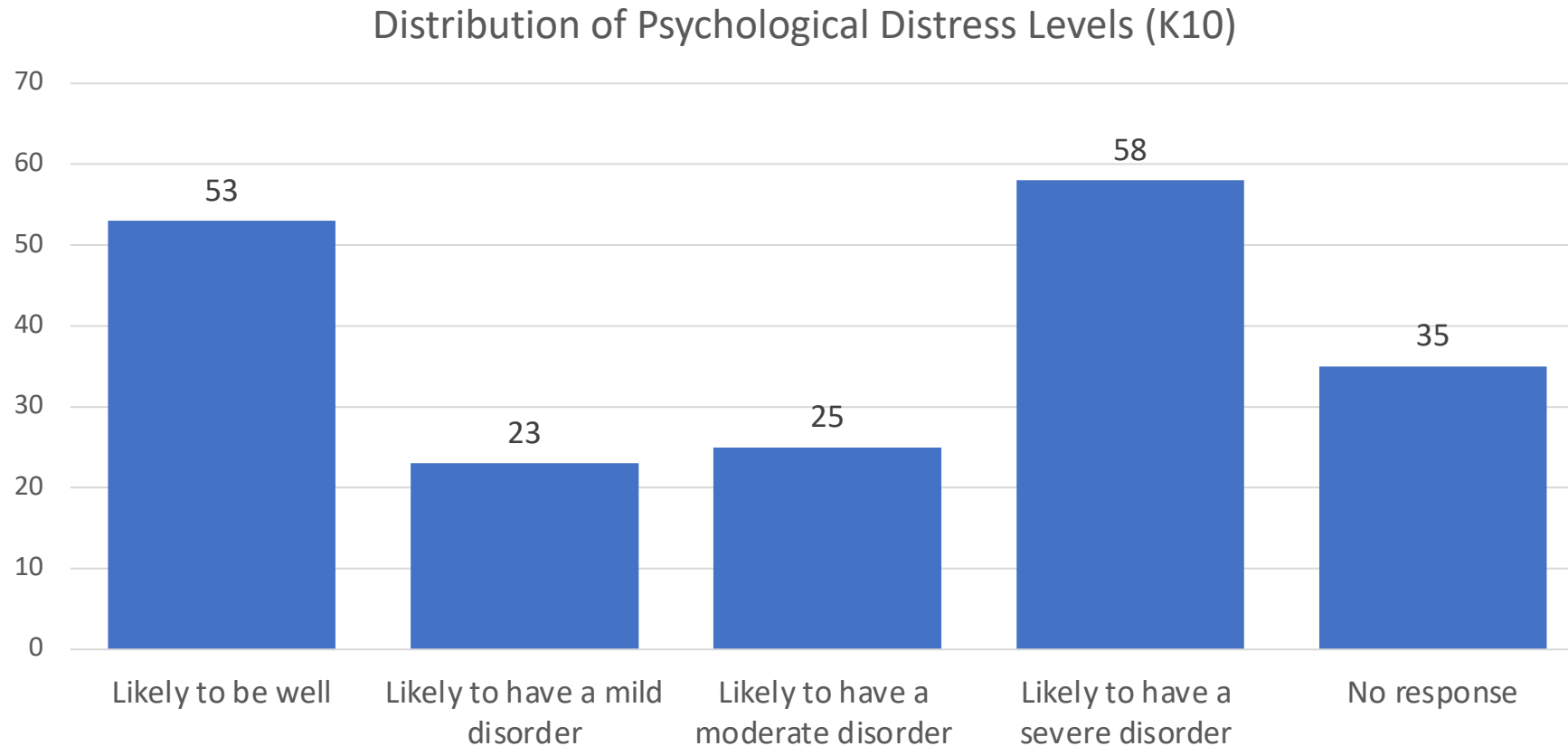
Stressors experienced by respondents



Change in Stress Levels in the past 6 months



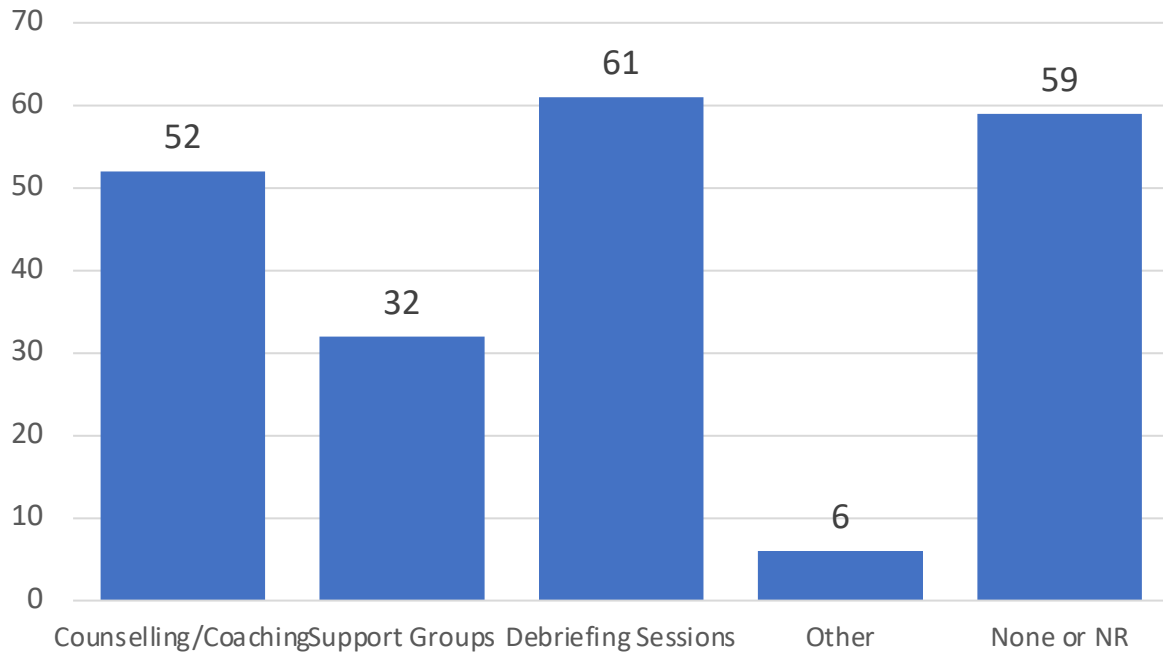
Psychiatric disease risk



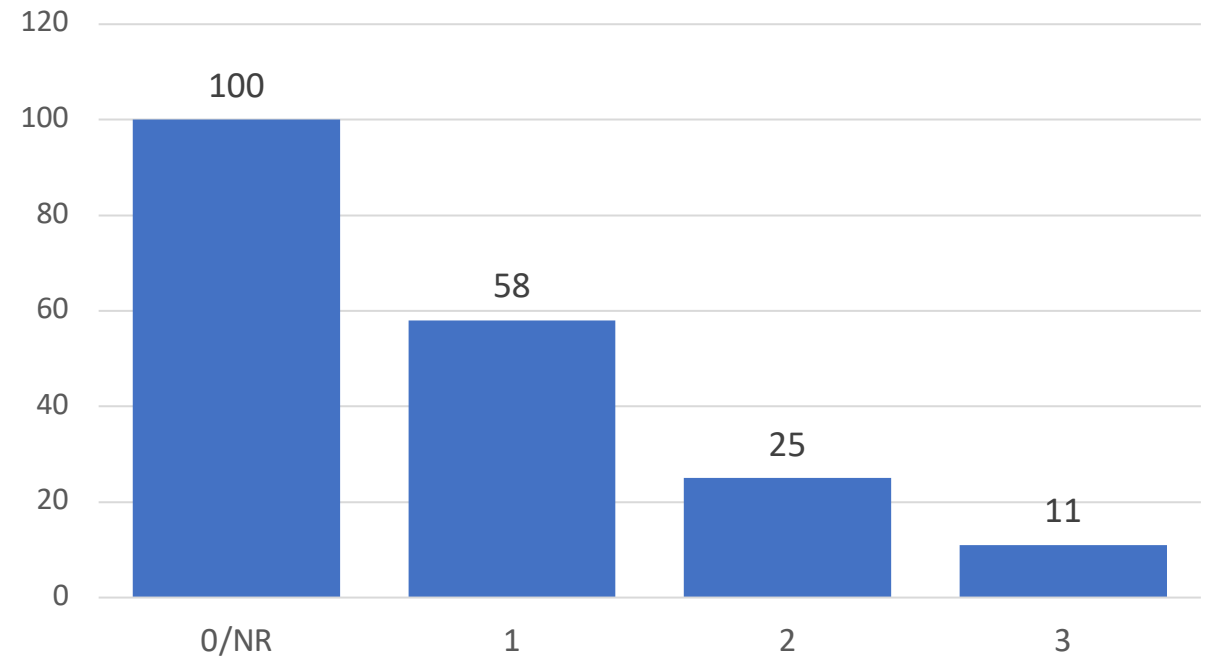
Among survey respondents who completed the K10 (n=159), 66% of respondents reported moderate psychological morbidity and were at risk of developing or already experiencing a psychological disorder. 51% surpassed the clinical cut-off for exhibiting symptoms of a present state mental disorder.

Availability of mental health resources

NGOs with mental health resources

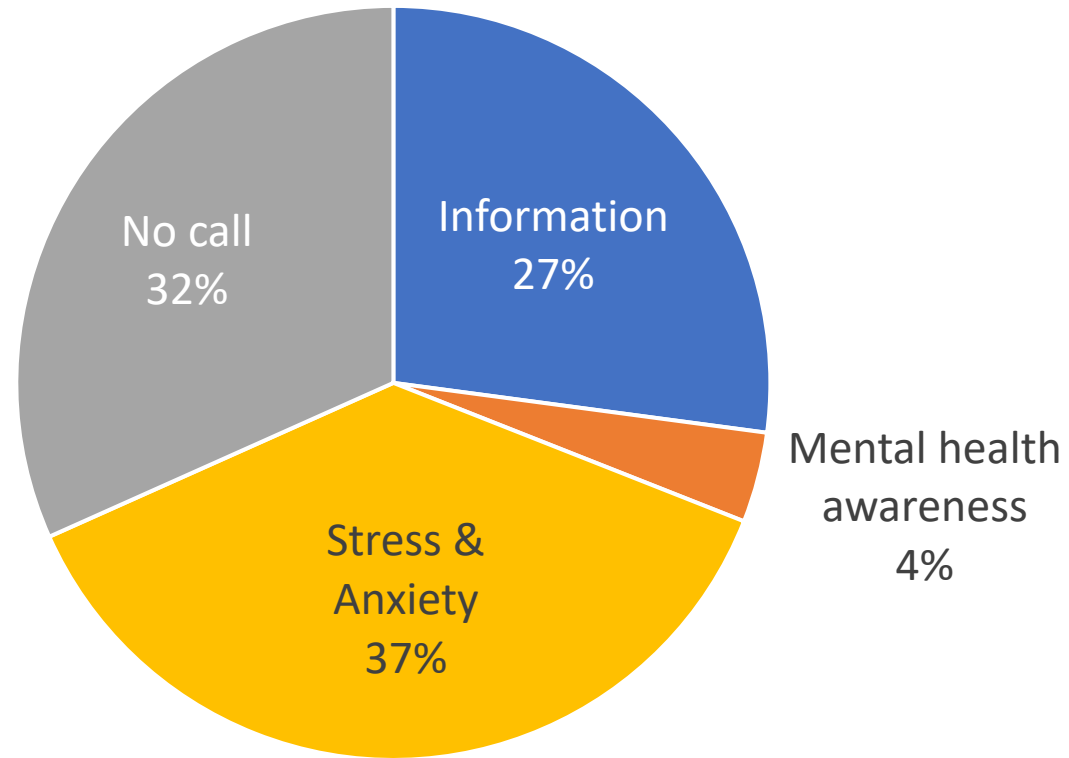


Number of available mental health resources



NPOwer usage and reasons

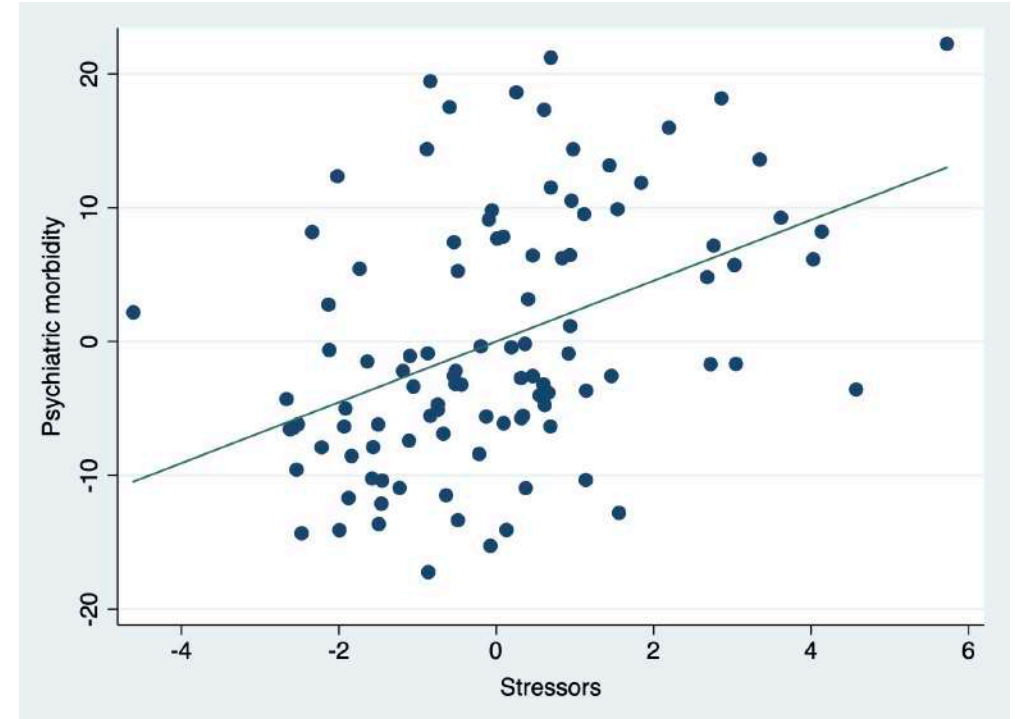
Reasons for calling NPOwer helpline



Predictors of psychiatric morbidity

Regression model (n=102)	Coefficient	Standard error	p-value
COVID stress	2.3	0.5	<0.001***
Age	0.6	2.0	0.784
Female	-4.8	2.0	0.020*
Racial group	-1.0	0.7	0.155
Psychosocial support resources	-3.5	1.0	0.001**
Level of leadership	-1.7	1.2	0.144
Number of staff	0.4	0.7	0.538
Change in stress	0.5	2.2	0.810
Constant	28.3	10.5	0.008***

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$



Greater number of COVID-related stressors and fewer psychosocial resources in NGOs are associated with greater psychiatric symptoms. Men exhibited worse mental health.



Results

III. Qualitative findings

Perceptions & experiences of NPOwer

- Gratitude
 - “I have called NPOwer and was debriefed telephonically by [counsellor name redacted]. It was most helpful. You are recognised and appreciated.”
- Content of NPOwer calls
 - Stress, anxiety, grief/loss, burnout, diverse symptoms of internalised stress
- Perceptions of NPOwer helpline
 - Relief, eager to resolve problems, feeling unseen
- Health-seeking behaviour
 - Low rates of professional psychological assistance, OTC medication use, containment & self-help tips

Limitations

- Measurement error from no response
- Brevity of survey
- Cross-sectional survey
- Sampling bias due to access issues

Conclusions

- NGO professionals experienced moderate to high levels of psychological distress and faced elevated mental illness risks
- COVID-related stress, low availability of mental health resources in NGOs, and being male were risk factors
- Extreme gratitude and desired need of NPOwer
- NPOwer is an extremely important resource amidst limited mental health resource ecology
- Immediate and longer-term acute support for NGO professionals facing stress, mental health challenges, burnout, and other problems

Recommendations

- 1) Provide immediate mental health services to staff
- 2) Manage expectations and clarify roles and responsibilities of staff and clients
- 3) Simple structured touch-points with staff can identify challenges and help address them
- 4) Paying extra attention to schedules, time off, and workload can help identify any staff that are overloaded
- 5) Organize simple programming internally to enhance staff mental health
- 6) Communicate with other NGOs, other civil society organisations, and other stakeholder groups to maximize resource allocation, share solutions, and problem solve