

# National Tradie Wellbeing Survey Results

**OzHelp Foundation**

**January 2022**



## Acknowledgements

This report would not be possible without the contribution of hundreds of tradies who completed the OzHelp survey. Thank you!

Thank you to TradeMutt for their support and supplying a prize. Thank you also to mental health and suicide prevention sector stakeholders that assisted in the promotion of the survey.

## Data limitations

Information provided in this report can only assist in a general way. Users should carefully make their own assessment as to its accuracy, currency, completeness and relevance for their purposes. This report uses data collected as part of an online survey. It is not a representative sample and for some responses, small sample sizes make it difficult to draw conclusions.

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## About OzHelp

OzHelp is a leading provider of health and wellbeing programs for hard-to-reach workers in high-risk industries.

OzHelp has been operating for over 20 years and is focused on reaching and supporting these priority groups. OzHelp's outreach approach takes support to workplaces and communities across Australia, with a specific focus on building and construction, transport, and farming and agriculture industries.

OzHelp's evidence-informed health and wellbeing programs help individuals build awareness of risk and protective factors for mental health and suicide prevention, adopt self-management strategies and seek help if required; build the capacity of individuals to notice the signs of distress in others, offer support and connect them to help; and provides early intervention health screening and access to wellbeing support and counselling.

OzHelp's Clinical Advisory Committee advises the Board and Management Team on consumer centred service design and improvement, clinical quality, safety and risk.

OzHelp is accredited under the Australian Government National Standards for Mental Health Services.

*OzHelp would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of all Country throughout Australia. We recognise their continuing connection to land, water and culture and pay our respects to Elders, past and present, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.*



## Executive Summary

It is well documented that there are elevated rates of poor mental health and suicide among workers in high-risk industries, such as building and construction, transport, mining, and agriculture and farming,<sup>1 2 3</sup> and that this group is a critical priority for prevention and early intervention in Australia.

OzHelp was established in 2001 with the aim of preventing suicide deaths among building and construction workers, including apprentices. Today it is a recognised and trusted provider of health and wellbeing programs for hard-to-reach workers in high-risk industries, including building and construction, transport, mining and agriculture and farming. These workplaces are traditionally male dominated,<sup>5</sup> although the proportion of women working in these industries is increasing.

OzHelp's outreach service model takes programs and support to workers and workplaces, in partnership with employers and communities. OzHelp provides tailored support to identify individuals at-risk and prevent the trajectory towards suicidal behaviours through two program streams:

- *early intervention health screening:*
  - to identify physical and mental health issues,
  - identify people who are at-risk of suicide and require immediate crisis interventions, and
  - provide an opportunity for wellbeing support and counselling, and referral to other services.
- *wellbeing education:*
  - to help individuals better understand their health and wellbeing, provide strategies to self-manage health and mental health issues, understand the signs of distress in themselves and others, and to seek help,
  - provide an opportunity for wellbeing support and counselling, and referral to other services, and
  - peer supporter training to help build the capacity of individuals to notice the signs of distress in others, offer support and connect them to help.

In September and October 2021 OzHelp conducted a National Tradie Wellbeing Survey. The survey is one of the ways OzHelp consults with workers in high-risk industries (tradies) to understand risk factors and stressors, and to ensure that its health and wellbeing programs are relevant and meet their needs.

OzHelp used the Survey Monkey platform and the survey was promoted through OzHelp online channels and mailing lists, industry partners and the mental health and suicide prevention sector. The three-minute online survey asked a range of questions including personal, work factors, stressors, health and wellbeing priorities and support preferences. The survey was completed by 314 individuals. This report presents the survey findings.

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<sup>1</sup> Milner A, Spittal MJ, Pirkis J, LaMontagne AD. Suicide by occupation: systematic review and meta-analysis. *Br J Psychiatry*. 2013;203(6):409-416.

<sup>2</sup> Roberts SE, Jaremin B, Lloyd K. High-risk occupations for suicide. *Psychol Med*. 2013;43(6):1231-1240.

<sup>3</sup> Milner A, King T. Men's work, women's work and suicide: a retrospective mortality study in Australia. *Aust N Z J Public Health*. 2019;43(1):27-32.

## Key findings

### Demographics

- 77% males, 21% female, 1% gender diverse, 1% would prefer not to say,
- Majority located in the ACT (49%), New South Wales (24.5%) and Queensland (10.5%),
- 16% aged under 25, 30% aged 25-35, 24% aged 36-45, 20% aged 46-55 and 10% 56 aged 56 and over, and
- 53% working in construction, 20% working in electricity, gas, water and waste services, 5% working in manufacturing, 5% working in mining.

### Top stressors

- The top five stressors for tradies: work pressures (62%), family and relationship pressures (44%), financial pressures (41%), mental health (38%), Covid-19 restrictions (29%).

### Sentiment

- 99% said mental health and wellbeing was important or somewhat important to them,
- 40% said they were very likely to seek support for their mental health, and
- 16.5% said they would not seek any support, even if they needed it.

### Top three preferences for support

- 54% said informal onsite BBQ catch ups,
- 43% said onsite mental health and wellbeing training, and
- 38% said onsite health and wellbeing screening.

### Industry

- 94% said mental health and wellbeing was important or somewhat important for their industry or employer,
- 42% said they had received mental health awareness training at work,
- 42% said they had received a health check at work, and
- 30% said they had not received any form of mental health training or support at work.

### Apprentices

- 58 survey respondents (18.5%) were apprentices,
- top issues causing stress for apprentices were mental health (55%), work pressure (50%), and family and relationship pressures (48%) and financial pressures (48%),
- 88% of apprentices surveyed said mental health and wellbeing was important to them, however 31% said they would not seek any support, even if they needed it,
- only 10% would reach out to a work mate if in need of support, however 93% feel confident or somewhat confident about supporting a work mate who needed support,
- apprentices would like to understand more about their own mental health (62%), healthy eating (55%), and how to help a friend or work mate (52%),
- top 3 preferences for support were informal onsite BBQ (69%), counselling online or by telephone (33%), and online mental health and wellbeing workshop (31%), and
- 31% said they had not received any mental health education or support at work.

## Conclusion

Positively, the majority of tradies said mental health and wellbeing was important to them and they would seek help, noting that 16.5% were not likely to seek any support if needed.

The top causes of stress were consistent with research on workers in high-risk industries, with work, family and relationship, and financial pressures the top three. A new stressor, related to Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions, was the fifth highest cause of stress.

Almost 47% of tradies wanted to learn more about how to help a friend or co-worker going through a tough time, and the majority felt very confident (58%) about supporting a workmate in need.

The data also highlighted that outreach mental health education and support in workplaces, and face-to-face and one-on-one supports, were the top preferences.

Looking at high level data for apprentices and noting the small sample size (n=58), 88% said mental health and wellbeing was important and for 55% of apprentices it was the top stressor. Concerningly, 31% said they would not seek help if they needed it. When asked about preferences for receiving support, informal onsite BBQs and online training and support, was preferred. Due to the small sample size OzHelp has not included a detailed breakdown of data for apprentices in this report. OzHelp notes that the data is concerning and is exploring ways to test and confirm these results and prioritise a service response for apprentices.

## Detailed National Tradie Survey Results

### Personal characteristics

A total of 314 (n=314) completed survey responses were received. 77.39% of respondents were male, and 54.14% were aged between 25-45.

**Table 1: Gender and age of survey respondents**

Gender		Age	
Male	77.39% (n=243)	Under 25	15.92% (n=50)
Female	21.02% (n=66)	25-35	30.25% (n=95)
Gender diverse	0.64% (n=2)	36-45	23.89% (n=75)
Prefer not to say	0.32% (n=1)	46-55	20.38% (n=64)
Prefer to self-describe	0.64% (n=2)	56 and over	9.55% (n=30)

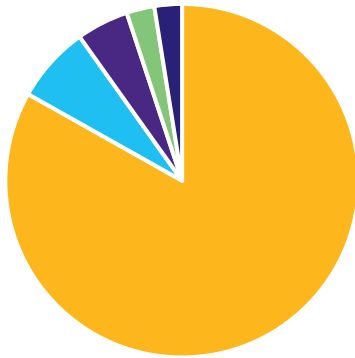
The majority of respondents were located in the ACT (49.36%), followed by NSW (24.52%) and Queensland (10.51%), likely influenced by OzHelp's geographic service reach and survey promotion through OzHelp channels. When asked about ethnic identity, the majority identified as Australian (84.71%).

In its 20 years supporting workers in high-risk industries OzHelp has seen that workforces are increasingly culturally diverse. OzHelp acknowledges that an online survey is not an effective way to engage with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) workers due to cultural and other barriers, and this is seen in the survey results. OzHelp is investigating alternative approaches to engage with CALD cohorts to better understand their mental health and wellbeing needs, and support preferences.

**Table 2: Location and ethnicity of survey respondents**

Location		Ethnicity	
ACT	49.36% (n=155)	Australian	84.71% (n=266)
NSW	24.52% (n=77)	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	2.55% (n=8)
NT	2.23% (n=7)	Asian	1.91% (n=6)
QLD	10.51% (n=33)	European	6.37% (n=20)
SA	2.55% (n=8)	All other ethnic groups	4.45% (n=14)
TAS	2.23% (n=7)		
VIC	7.64% (n=24)		
WA	0.96% (n=3)		

### EMPLOYMENT TYPE



■ Full-time ■ Self employed ■ Casual ■ Part-time ■ Other

### Employment type and industry

83.15% (n=261) of tradies worked full-time, 7.01% (n=22) were self employed, 4.78% (n=15) were casual and 2.55% worked part-time (n=8).

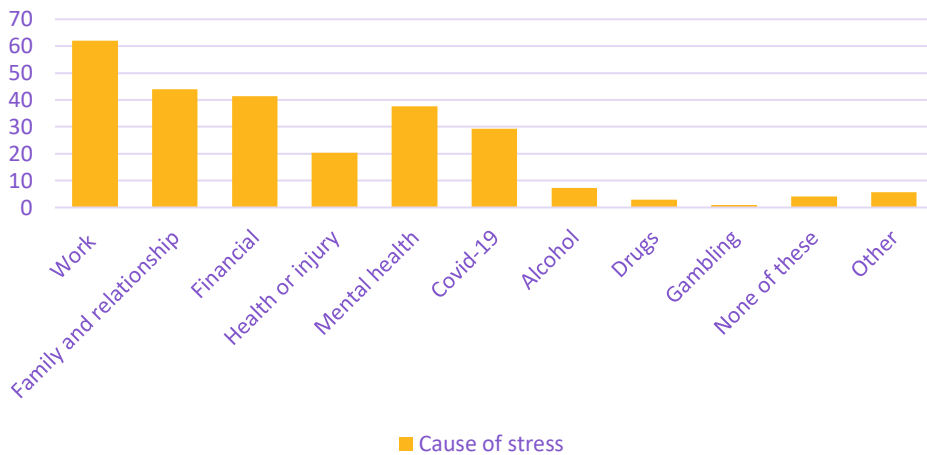
The majority worked in the construction industry (53.18%), followed by electricity, gas, water and waste services (20.06%), manufacturing (5.41%) and mining (4.78%).

18.47% (n=58) indicated they were completing their apprenticeship.

### Causes of stress and help seeking preferences

Tradies were asked about the issues causing the most stress, how likely they would be to seek support for their mental health and wellbeing, and preferences for support.

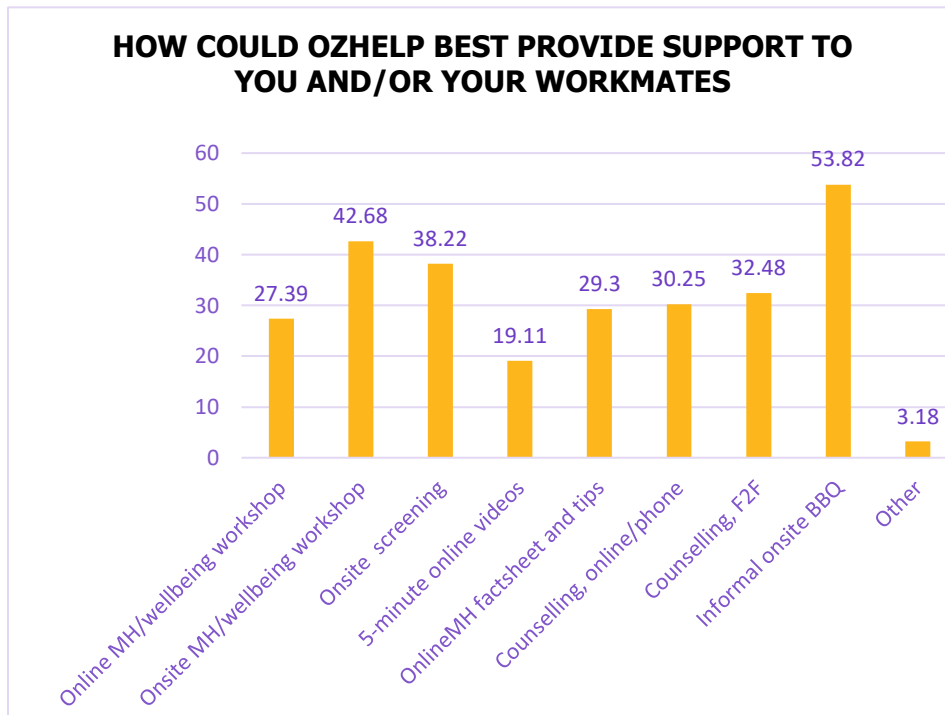
### CAUSE OF MOST STRESS



The top issues causing stress were: work pressures (62.10%), family and relationship pressures (43.95%), financial pressures (41.40%), mental health (37.58%), Covid-19 restrictions (29.3%).



92.04% (n=289) of survey respondents said that mental health and wellbeing was important to them, with 7.01% saying somewhat important and 0.96% responding it was not important. 40.13% (n=126) said they were very likely to seek support for their mental health and wellbeing, with 43.31% somewhat likely and 16.56% saying they were not likely to seek support. The high rate of responses indicating the importance of mental health and wellbeing and likelihood of seeking support is positive, however with 16.56% (n=52) not likely to get support there is still more action required to address stigma and improve help seeking.



When asked how OzHelp could best provide support to them or their workmates, the top five responses were: informal onsite BBQ catch ups (53.82%), onsite mental health and wellbeing workshop (42.68%), onsite health and wellbeing screening (38.22%), counselling face-to-face (32.48%) and counselling provided online or by telephone (30.25%). The top responses show a strong preference for outreach, workplace-based education and support, as well as face-to-face or one-on-one support options. It is positive that some tradies have a preference to access training, information and support online, particularly with Covid-19 impacting outreach and face-to-face service delivery in recent times.

The top 5 issues tradies were interested to learn more about:

- understanding their mental health e.g. stress, work life balance, feeling low, having a tough time (59.55%),
- how to help a friend or co-worker going through a tough time (46.82%),
- relationship and/or family issues (36.62%),
- healthy eating (35.03%), and
- physical activity (26.43%).

In exploring the provision of support online OzHelp was interested to understand tradie use of social media as a way of providing support through channels they were already using. 69.45% (n=218) tradies said they used Facebook, followed by Instagram (53.18%) and LinkedIn (21.97%). 13.06% (n=41) of tradies did not use any social media platforms. The survey also asked where tradies got their daily news with the majority answering social media (47.77%), followed by online (46.18%) and the radio (45.86%).

### Providing support to others (peer supporter)

57.96% (n=182) of survey respondents said they felt confident about supporting a workmate in need, with 38.22% somewhat confident and 3.82% not very confident.

28.98% (n=91) said they were very likely to reach out for support from a workmate, with 35.99% somewhat likely and 35.03% not likely. This data suggests that stigma around mental illness is still prevalent, and in male-dominated industries, concepts of masculinity, particularly toughness and emotional self-control, are an additional barrier to seeking help.

### Industry

72.61% (n=228) of survey respondents responded that they thought mental health and wellbeing was important to their industry/employer, with 21.66% (n=68) saying it was somewhat important and 5.73% (n=18) saying it was not important.

Tradies were also asked about mental health and wellbeing education and support received at work. 42.36% (n=133) had received a health check; 41.72% (n=131) had received mental health awareness training, followed by peer support from a fellow worker (26.75%) and counselling services (16.56%). 29.94% (n=94) had not received education or training, a health check, or accessed support at work. The Tradie Tune Up early intervention health screen is a key outreach service offered by OzHelp. The high percentage of tradies that had received a health check is likely influenced by survey respondent location in OzHelp’s geographic service reach and promotion through OzHelp channels.

