

3 Mental Health and Well-being of Workforce

The Thai workforce has a high level of stress. The suicide rate is as high as 7 per 100,000 population.

“The level of happiness depends on one’s ability to manage problems. Those better at problem management are happier.”

The many problems that Thailand is currently facing, especially the economic crisis, are no doubt affecting the mental health of Thai people. Those most affected by the economic downturn are likely to be the workers who are the main engine propelling Thailand’s economic growth.

The Public Health Statistics stated that the rate of suicide in 2007 among those of working age was seven in 100,000 population higher than the overall national rates in 2007 and 2008 at 5.95 and 5.96 per 100,000 population respectively.

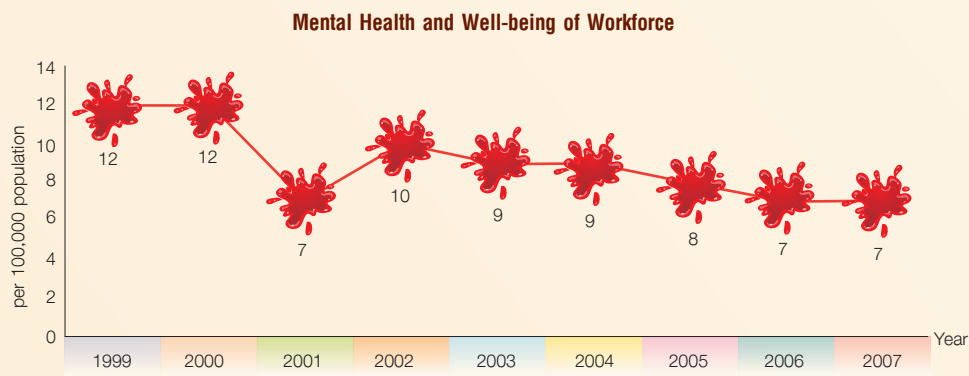
Besides suicide, stress levels have also risen.

A 2007 ABAC Poll conducted in 13 provinces with support from Thai Health Promotion Foundation, found that almost 10% of Thai workers—from unskilled workers to office workers—had contemplated suicide due to low quality of life. Day-wage workers were found to have lower level of mental health than other groups of workers, perhaps because of their occupational insecurity and unreliable income.

This finding agrees with the data from the National Statistical Office survey on conditions of society, culture and mental health in Thailand. Conducted in collaboration with Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, the survey found day-wage workers to have the lowest mental health scores, while government and state enterprise employees were found to hit the highest marks.

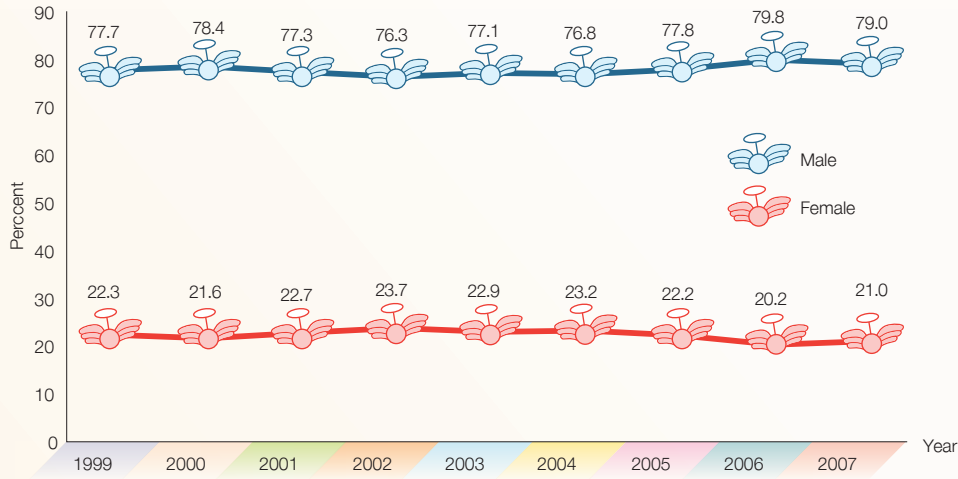
Although there are some signs of troubles, the overall picture of Thai workers’ mental health indicates a high level of happiness which, however, decreases with age. Moreover, the level of happiness is found to correspond with the ability to manage problems. Those who are better at problem management are found to be happier.

Written by the Thai Health Working Group



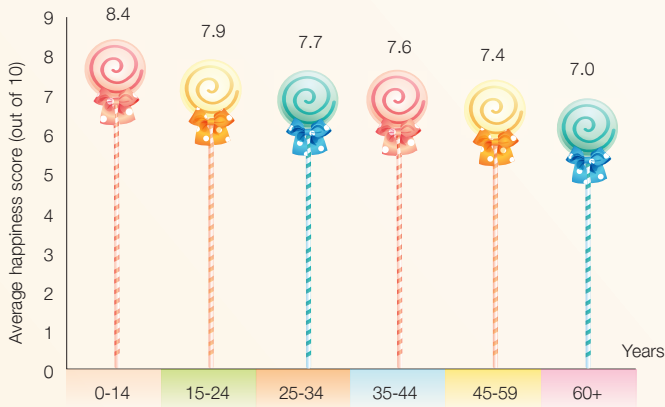
Source: Bureau of Policy and Strategy, Ministry of Public Health, 1999-2007

Suicide rate of workers aged 15-59



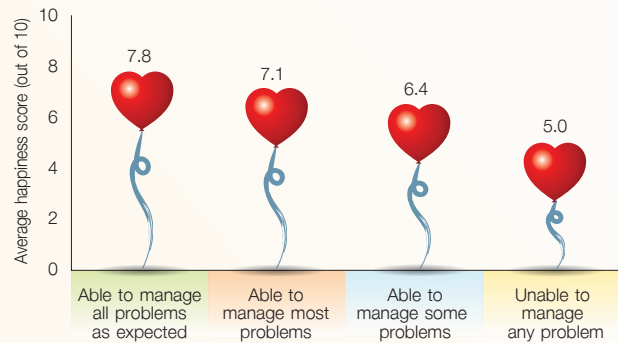
Source: Bureau of Policy and Strategy, Ministry of Public Health, 1999-2007

Average Happiness Scores by age group



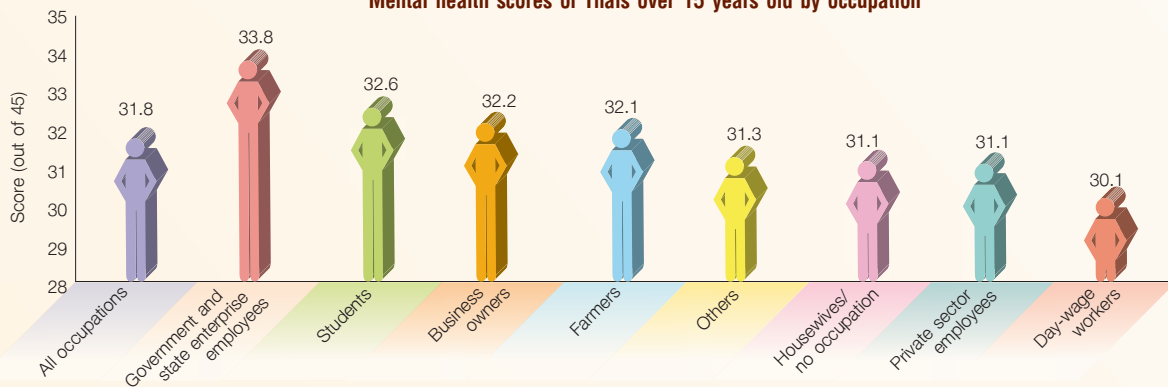
Source: The 2008 Survey on Conditions of Society, Culture and Mental Health. National Statistical Office in collaboration with Institute for Population and Social Research and the Department of Mental Health, 2008.

Average happiness scores of workers in the industrial and service sectors categorized by problem management ability



Source: Churnrurai Kanchanachitra et al. 2008. Quality of life of the workers in industrial and service sectors.

Mental health scores of Thais over 15 years old by occupation



Source: The 2008 Survey on Conditions of Society, Culture and Mental Health. National Statistical Office in collaboration with Institute for Population and Social Research and the Department of Mental Health, 2008.