



ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEPTION OF MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

of volunteers and staff
with a special focus on youth in the Americas

2022

.....
The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's volunteer-based humanitarian network, reaching 150 million people each year through our 192 member National Societies.

Together, we act before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. We do it with impartiality in terms of nationality, race, gender, beliefs, social class and political opinions.

The strength of the movement lies in our network of volunteers, community experience, independence and neutrality. We work to improve humanitarian standards, as partners in development and in response to disasters. We persuade decision makers to act in the interest of vulnerable people at all times. The result: we enable healthy and safe communities, reduce vulnerabilities, strengthen resilience and foster a culture of peace around the world.

.....

© International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Americas Regional Office, 2022
Any part of this publication may be quoted, copied, translated into other languages or adapted to meet local needs without the prior permission of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, provided the source is clearly indicated. This report was written by the Interamerican Centre for Volunteering Development, Network of Experts, with support from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Volunteering and Youth Development Coordination.



Table of CONTENTS



01.

Introduction

05.

Methods.

06.

Demographic Information

07.

Results

19.

Discussion

27.

Conclusion

28.

References

Who are we?

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is a global humanitarian organization that works to prevent and alleviate human suffering. With a presence through its 192 National Societies, the IFRC is one of the world's largest volunteer-based organizations.

Volunteers are the backbone of the Red Cross Red Crescent movement, providing essential services and support to communities in times of crisis and disaster.

Volunteering with the Red Cross can be a deeply rewarding experience, but it can also be challenging and stressful. A 2020 study by the IFRC on volunteer mental health found that over half (53%) of Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers surveyed reported experiencing some form of psychological distress, with anxiety (41%) and depression (29%) being the most commonly reported challenges. The study also found that younger volunteers (under the age of 30) were more likely to report mental health challenges compared to older volunteers.

These findings highlight the significant impact that volunteer work can have on mental health and the importance of prioritizing mental health and psychosocial support for volunteers. By addressing the mental health needs of volunteers, the IFRC and National Societies can help ensure that volunteers are able to continue their important work in a healthy and sustainable way.



Volunteers are the heart of the Red Cross movement. Volunteers are impacted by stress and hardship as everyone else is.

Volunteers are impacted by stress and hardship as everyone else is. Often, volunteers respond to disasters that affect their own communities while themselves suffering from personal loss. COVID-19, natural disasters, and other emergencies may leave volunteers with heightened feelings of stress, fear, and sadness. When they are not supported properly and in a timely manner through difficult emotions, these emotions can have long-term impacts on a volunteer's life. This effect is magnified in young volunteers.

Even outside the context of an emergency, many other factors may affect a volunteer's mental health. Demanding work hours, economic or social factors outside the Red Cross, for example, may also play a role in a volunteer's mental health.

Across the Americas, Red Cross volunteers are providing care and responding to major crises in 35 countries. In 2021, there were over 500,000 volunteers in the Americas, with more than 80,000 of those being youth.¹

We must care for those who care, and when volunteers are not properly cared for and supported, this translates into poor volunteer work, high volunteer dropouts, disillusionment, or impacts on a volunteer's life.



OUR COMMITMENT TO MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

National Societies must invest in their volunteers' mental health. This means understanding their needs, their capacities, and contextualizing a volunteer's experience with their culture, language, and individuality.

As an effort to address volunteer mental health, the IFRC and National Societies have implemented a multitude of strategies and policies that seek to make sure volunteers are cared for to the best of our capacity. As described in 'Addressing mental health and psychosocial needs of people affected by armed conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies' and the 'International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement policy on addressing mental health and psychosocial needs', where the needs of volunteers are explicitly mentioned:

"Volunteers are particularly at risk of developing mental health problems due to the nature of their work and the challenges they face. Therefore, it is essential that the psychosocial needs of volunteers are taken into account and that they have access to appropriate support and care."

2

A key part of improving our care for mental health in volunteers is allowing them to have an active role in the development of new strategies, policies and decision-making with their National Societies and at a regional level. The Survey for Perceptions of Mental Health in Young Volunteers serves as a way to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in the Americas, as well as shedding light on the challenges volunteers face relating to their mental health, how they perceive the resources available to them, and how their mental health impacts their work. The survey allows volunteers to have a voice in the policies and strategies that affect them.



GOALS OF THIS SURVEY

To identify key weaknesses and strengths in Youth Mental Health at the level of the Americas, so that operations may improve training, resources, and awareness programmes in the future.

Specifically:

01

IDENTIFY CHALLENGES

Identify the key challenges that young volunteers in the Americas face related to their mental health and well-being, and gain a better understanding of how these challenges impact their work as volunteers.

02

EVALUATE CURRENT RESOURCES

Evaluate the effectiveness of current mental health support and resources provided to young volunteers by the Red Cross and other organizations, and identify areas for improvement.

03

DEVELOP STRATEGIES

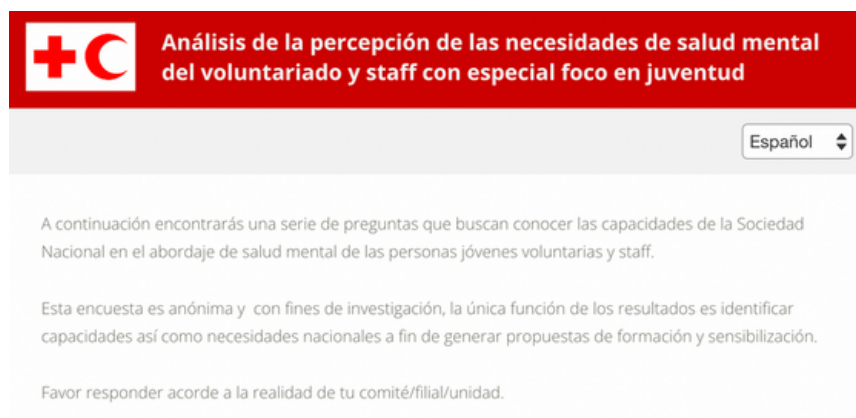
Develop targeted strategies and interventions to support the mental health and well-being of young volunteers, including increasing awareness of mental health issues, improving access to mental health resources, and providing training on coping strategies and self-care practices.

SURVEY:

A survey was sent to youth across Red Cross in the 35 countries of the Americas, opening on July 12th, 2022 and with a closing date of August 31st, 2022. The survey was conducted via the online survey platform SurveyMonkey.

The Survey probes at the Youth's perception of Mental Health resources available to them, their effectiveness, and the impacts of Mental Health on their professional lives using both multiple choice and open-ended questions. The full answer and question set for the survey is available upon request. The survey was strictly anonymous, and all identifiers were removed from responses.

With 25 questions, the survey took around 7 minutes to complete. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject, respondents had the opportunity to skip over questions should they wish.



+C Análisis de la percepción de las necesidades de salud mental del voluntariado y staff con especial foco en juventud

Español

A continuación encontrarás una serie de preguntas que buscan conocer las capacidades de la Sociedad Nacional en el abordaje de salud mental de las personas jóvenes voluntarias y staff.

Esta encuesta es anónima y con fines de investigación, la única función de los resultados es identificar capacidades así como necesidades nacionales a fin de generar propuestas de formación y sensibilización.

Favor responder acorde a la realidad de tu comité/filial/unidad.

Figure 1: Spanish version of the front page of the survey, as distributed to young volunteers and staff.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Many aspects of the volunteer's mental health experience are hard to conceptualize in close-ended or multiple-choice questions. Open-ended questions were included to better inform our understanding of volunteer mental health perceptions. Every single comment is valuable, and volunteers have different needs. With that in mind, the goal of this large-scale survey is to identify major themes that we can address holistically. National Societies are encouraged to request de-identified data from their country to respond more specifically to the needs of their volunteers with attention to national contexts. This survey is also meant to encourage more specific data collection processes that can address the uniqueness of volunteer experiences.

Incomplete answers were maintained so long as the answers were comprehensible. The analysis excluded empty or nonsensical answers to questions. The analysis considers all languages and countries together.

S
D
S
H
O
D
S
M
E
T
H
O
D
S

RESULTS: Demographic Information

We received 1,462 eligible survey entries with an average completion rate of 57%.

The Survey was available in Spanish, English, French and Portuguese. The most common respondent language was Spanish (68%), followed by English (30%), with French and Portuguese comprising only 4 entries.

The survey was available to Red Cross youth up to 35 years of age, including those in roles as volunteers, leaders, and staff. The most common respondent age was between 16 to 20 years of age (33.9%), and most respondents (86%) were volunteers.

Although the survey was available to all 35 National Societies in the Americas, not all countries participated. Highest representation occurred from Mexico, with 31% of answers from Mexican Red Cross members, followed by Ecuador (16%) and Honduras (14.9%). Figure 2 shows National Societies who participated.

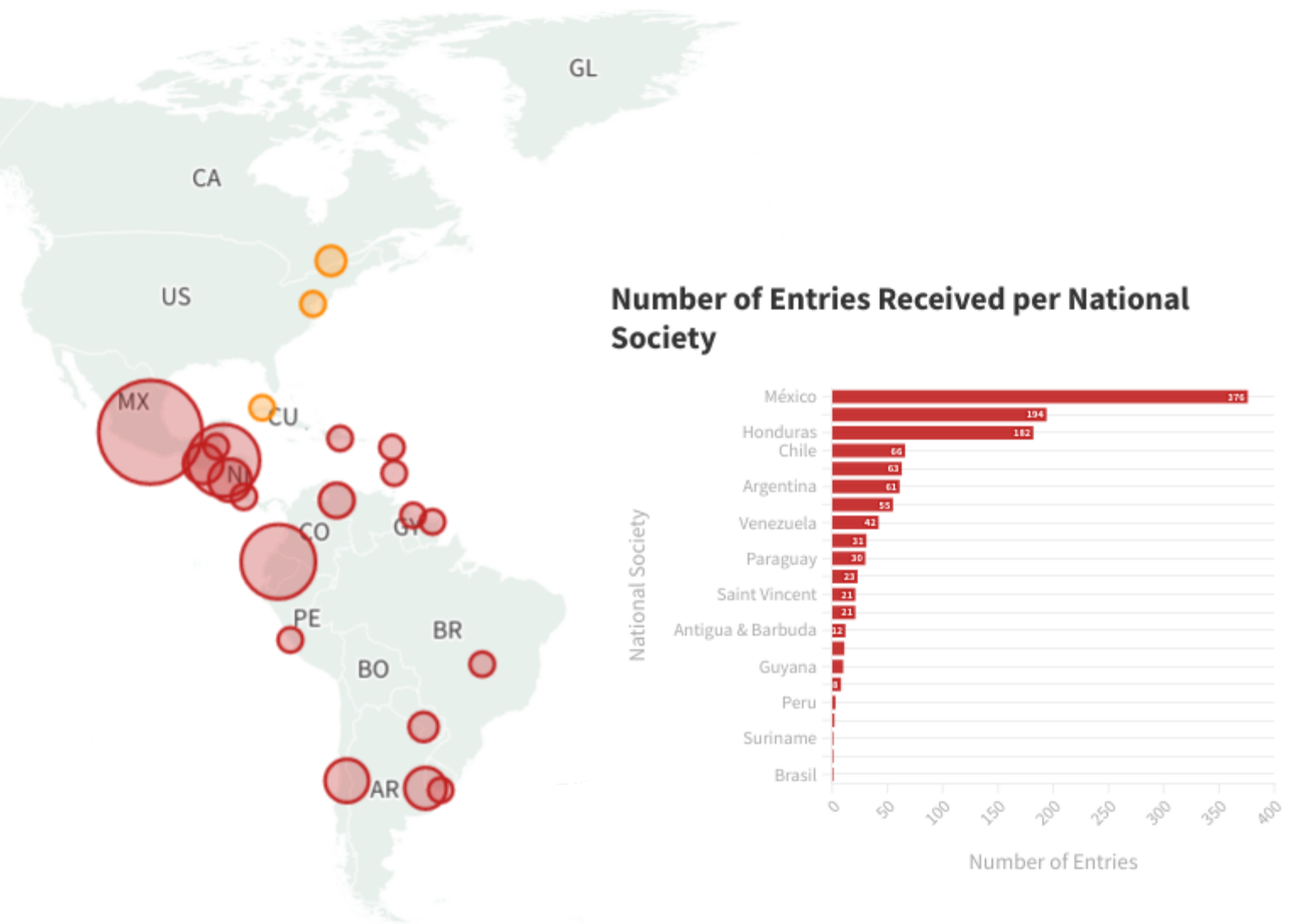


Figure 2: Left, map depiction of National Societies that participated with larger circles indicating larger number of entries. Red dots represent Spanish or Portuguese entries, yellow dots indicate English or French entries. Right, bar graph depicting number of entries received per National Society.

SURVEY RESULTS: Current Mental Health Needs

Following are the summarized main results of the survey. The results are separated in five major categories: current mental health needs, available resources, asking for help, support and life impacts. There is also a section dedicated to youth voices and a select number of answers were chosen to display youth perspectives in their own words. Full results are available upon request.

Figure 3: Name 3 mental health challenges related to your role.

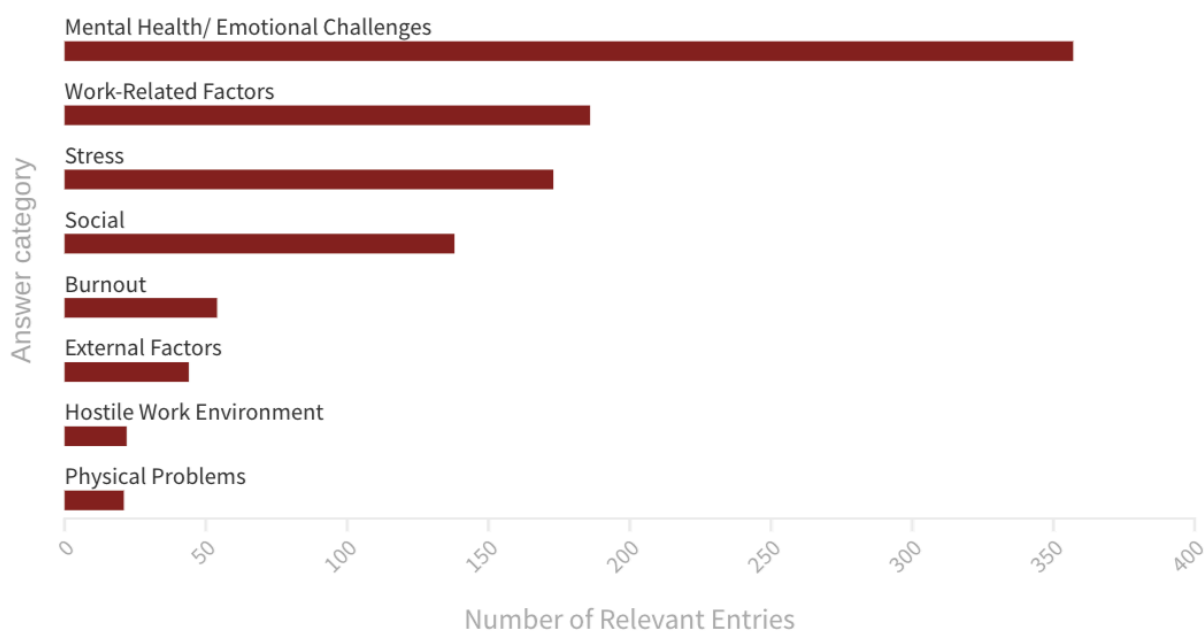
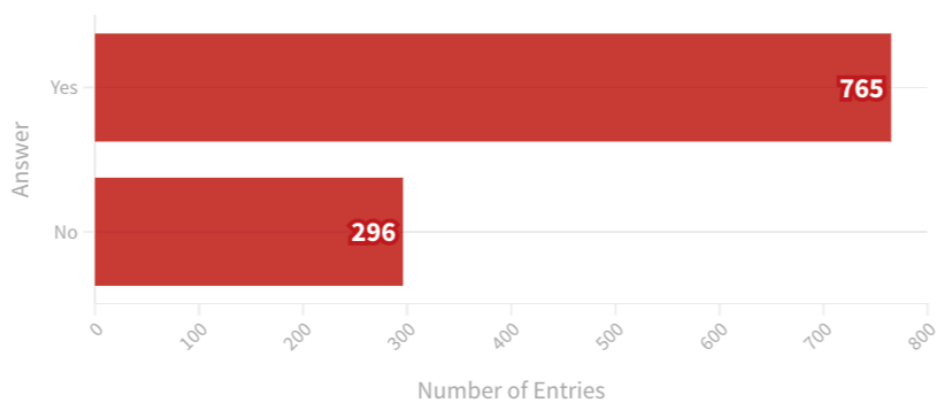


Figure 4: Do you feel properly supported by your team in terms of mental health?



RESULTS: Available Resources

Part of the IFRC's commitment to mental health includes having resources available for volunteers who experience mental health challenges. These next questions probe at how volunteers have experienced these resources and what they believe would be helpful to include as tools to improve their mental health.

Figure 5: What kind of support have you received from your local Red Cross?

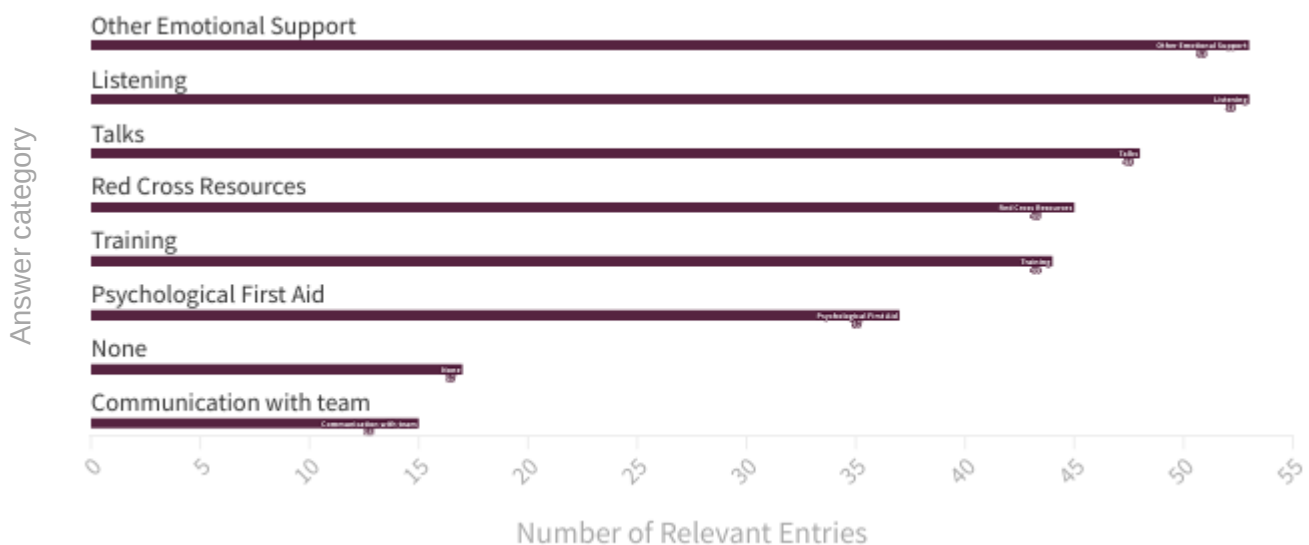


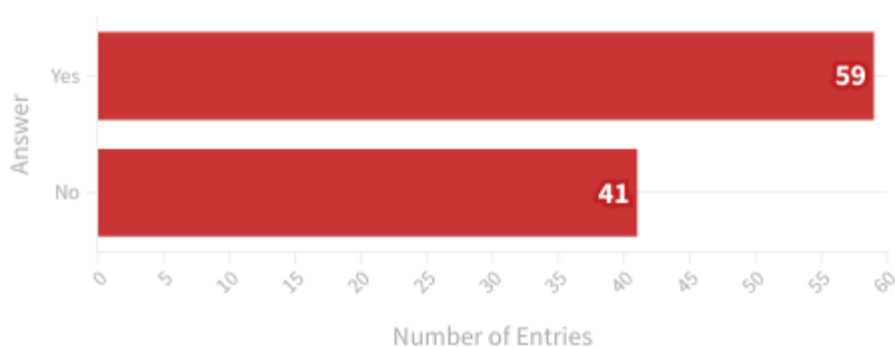
Figure 6: What should your local Red Cross offer to improve your mental health?



RESULTS: Asking for help

Seeking help from mental health professionals or support groups can provide effective tools and resources to manage and cope with mental health challenges, and also builds resilience for volunteers to continue to provide critical support to their communities. These next set of questions evaluates the challenges that volunteer may face when asking for help.

Figure 7: Do you know when/how to ask for help at your local Red Cross?



For follow-up to those who answered "yes", we asked: *"How do you know that you should ask for help?"*

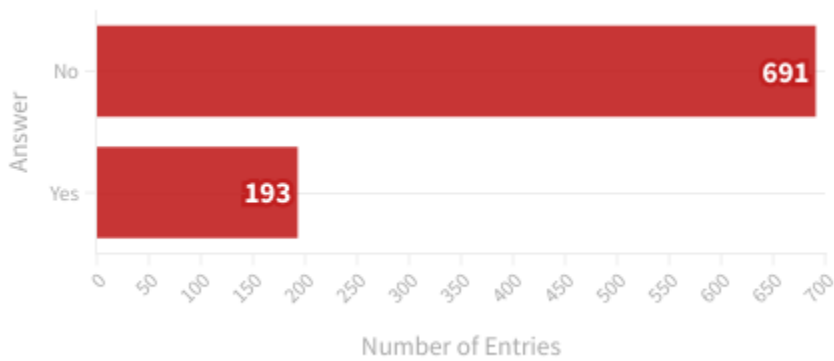
For this, the top answer was emotional symptoms (40%), followed by stress/cognitive symptoms (21%). A full description of these results can be found in the Appendix.

In addition, we also asked: *"How do you ask for help?"* for which the top three responses, in order of most to least comments was: speaking to a mental health professional (31%), speaking with their team leader (30%), and speaking to friends and those they trust (27.5%).



RESULTS: Asking for help

Figure 8: Have you had any bad experiences asking for help at the Red Cross or externally?



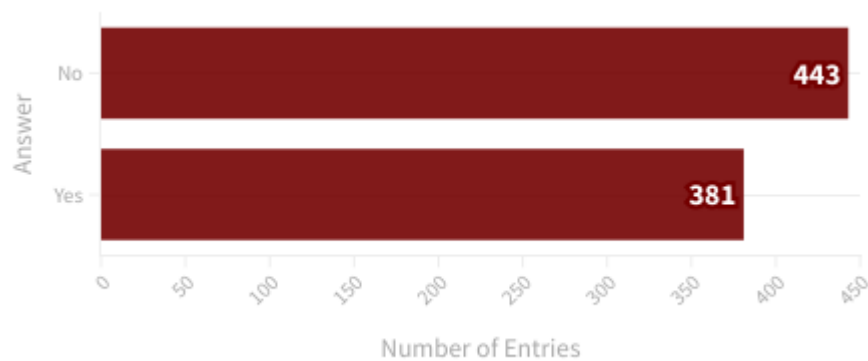
What happened?

Of those who expressed having had a bad experience asking for mental health, 44% expressed that their request had been ignored or dismissed. 22% of comments also mentioned they believed the Red Cross lacked the appropriate resources. A full explanation of these results is available in the Appendix.



RESULTS: Asking for help

Figure 9: Have you found yourself in a situation where a fellow Red Cross member has asked for your help?



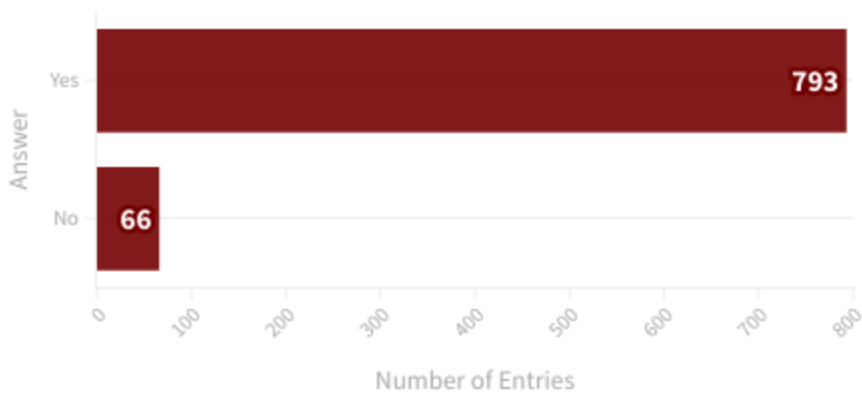
What did you do?

Of those who mentioned that a Red Cross member had sought them for help, 70% mentioned that the help they provided was through empathic listening. In contrast, only 2% mentioned using Red Cross resources, 1% mentioned applying Psychological First Aid, and 1% mentioned doing nothing after being asked for help.

RESULTS: Support

Support is crucial for mental health as it can help individuals cope with life's challenges, manage stress, and improve their overall well-being. The following questions probe at perceived levels of support both within and without the Red Cross.

Figure 10: Does your family support your Red Cross work?



Did you know?

Research suggests that employees who feel supported by their families have better mental health at work. A study published in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* found that employees who received emotional support from their family members experienced less stress and burnout on the job.

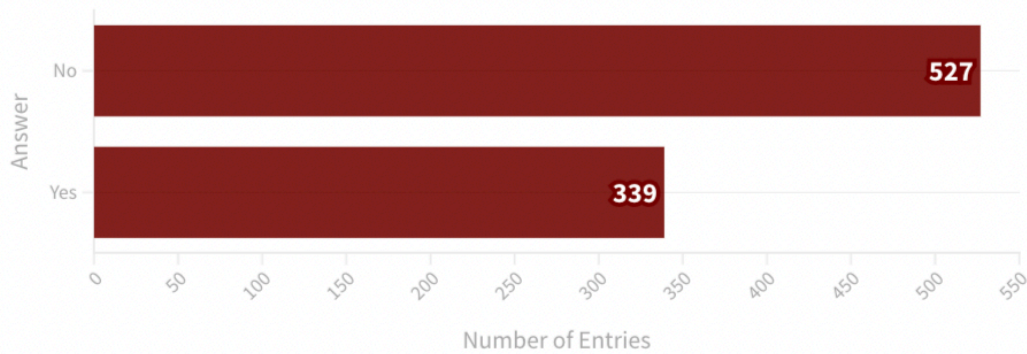
Family support can also play a role in how employees cope with challenging situations at work. When employees have strong family support networks, they may be better equipped to handle stress and setbacks in the workplace.



RESULTS: Life Impacts

Mental health can impact all aspects of life: including work, relationships and productivity. These questions explored how volunteers have experienced the impact of mental health challenges at their work and beyond.

Figure 11: Has your work at the Red Cross been impacted by not feeling well emotionally?



How has your work been affected?

Of those who expressed that their emotional well-being affected their work, 58% mentioned that primarily their productivity had been affected. Other comments mentioned that the emotional symptoms caused negative impacts like anxiety and insecurity in the workplace (23%) while other comments included impacts on their motivation (13%) or social impacts (6%).



RESULTS: Youth Voices

It is important to hear youth describe, in their own words, how they envision change at the Red Cross. Full answers summaries are available in Figure 12 and 13.

What would you like leaders to know about youth mental health?

It is a lot more prevalent than they might think, as it may not be as obvious as they might think. The best thing they can do is genuinely care and listen to their employees to listen to them. They may not always be able to fix the issue but they can listen.

The strong pressures of society, as well as social media

We were very affected by the pandemic

That youth are not considered a "weaker" generation but simply that the standards for good work-life balance are higher; standard of living is higher

That if we burn out our youth now, we will not have a sustainable RC workforce moving forward

It is important to not overwork

That you can hide what you are really feeling, for that reason it is overlooked

RESULTS: Youth Voices

It is important to hear youth describe their opinions in their own words, following are some extracts of responses from the surveys from young Red Cross volunteers themselves.

How can the Red Cross make sure to include youth in mental health topics?

Do sessions that are youth oriented or have peer educators that are youths

Ensuring Youth are aware of the benefits available to them.

In Support Groups. It would be Super fundamental!

Create psychological support programs exclusively for young people

Training and recreational activities

Be inclusive

Inclusion of youths in all activities of the Red Cross

RESULTS: Youth Voices: Summaries

Figure 12: What would you like leaders to know about youth mental health?

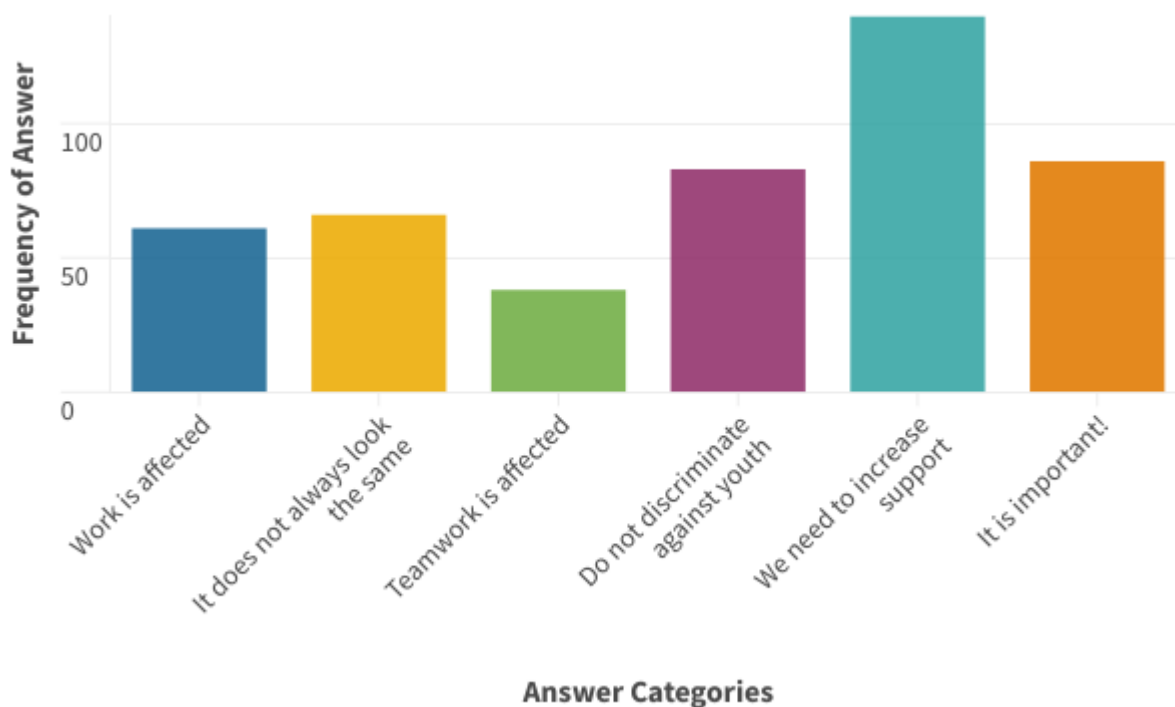
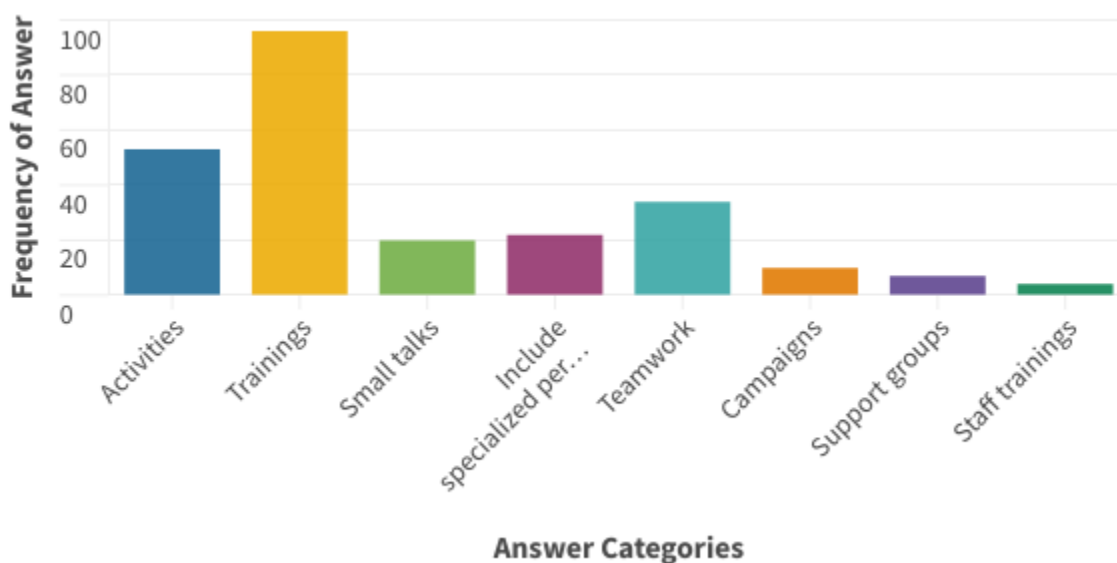


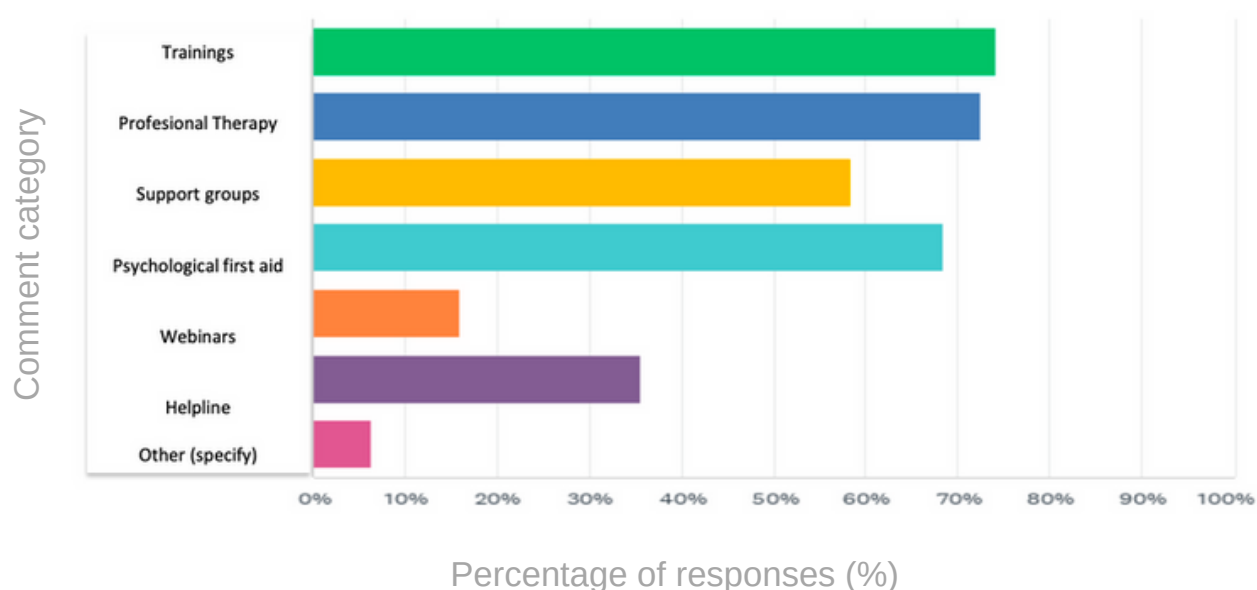
Figure 13: How can the Red Cross make sure to include youth in mental health topics?



RESULTS: Looking to the Future

It is important to take into account volunteer feedback in how we develop strategies for addressing mental health in the future. These questions probe at the volunteers' vision of a Red Cross that is better equipped to help them with their mental health challenges.

Figure 14: What services should your National Society offer to help alleviate internal mental health challenges?

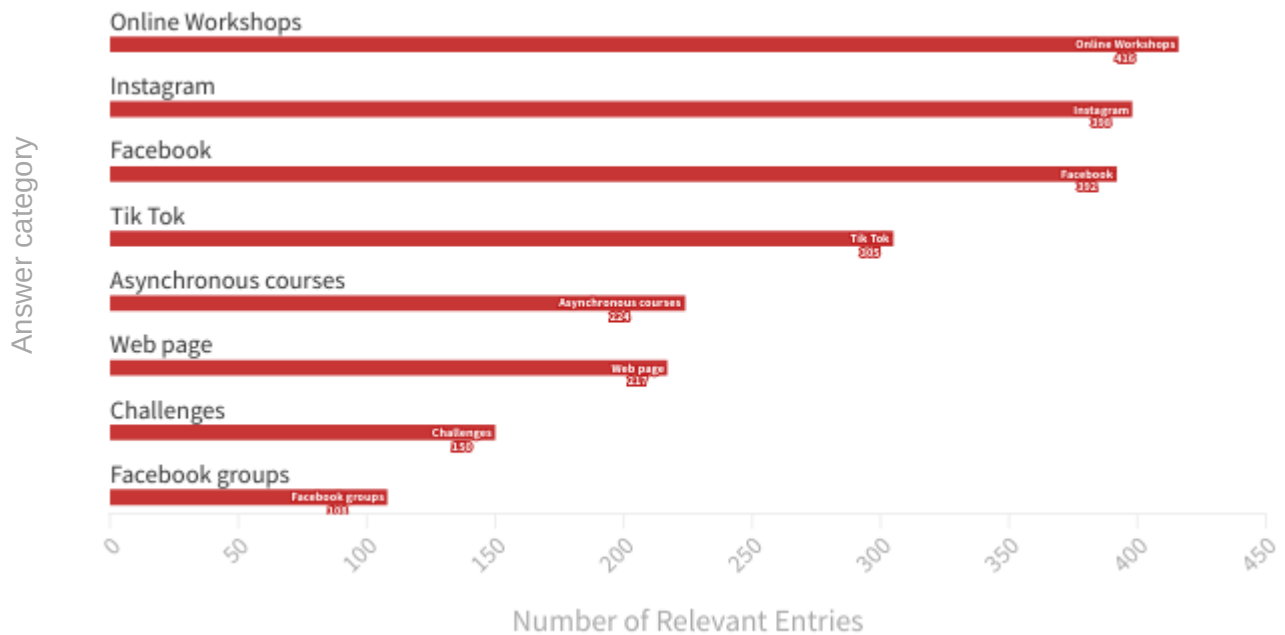


How should services be offered?

When asked about how services should be offered, 71% mentioned they believed services should be offered at an individual level, 81% also expressed that these services should be in-person, rather than virtual or hybrid. 71% answered that they believed the services should be offered within the Red Cross, and 41% believed that the appropriate length for intervention was one month.

RESULTS: Looking to the Future

Figure 15: What is the best medium to share informative resources on mental health?



DISCUSSION: KEY FINDINGS

Mental health is a vital topic to address in volunteers, as many of these work in stressful situations. Our study underscores the importance of mental health perceptions among young volunteers across the Americas. The study found that:

- Almost 41% did not know how to ask for help within the Red Cross.
- 21% of respondents had bad experiences seeking mental health help, with 44% of these being ignored or dismissed.
- 39.15% of the respondents felt that their activities at the Red Cross had at least at one point been affected by poor mental health, with 58% of these reporting that their productivity was impacted.
- A significant number of respondents (81%) believed that mental health resources should be provided in person rather than virtually, by phone or hybrid.

Key Question: What should your local Red Cross offer to improve your mental health?



25%

Training



15%

**Better team
communication**



15%

**Access to
psychologists**

IN CONTEXT: MENTAL HEALTH AND VOLUNTEERISM IN THE AMERICAS

Volunteerism is a critical component of civil society in the Americas, providing essential services and support to communities across the region. However, volunteering can also be a challenging and stressful endeavor, particularly for young people who may face a range of stressors and challenges in the course of their work. Mental health is an important concern for young volunteers in particular, as they may be at increased risk for developing mental health problems due to the nature of their work and the challenges they face.

Mental health among youth is a significant concern in Latin America and the Caribbean, with one in five young people experiencing mental health problems. According to the Pan American Health Organization, suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15- to 29-year-olds in the region. Mental health problems are exacerbated by the region's social, economic, and political challenges, including poverty, violence, and inequality. Young people face also unique challenges regarding mental health, including the stress of managing school, work, and volunteering responsibilities. Additionally, many young people may lack experience or resources to effectively cope with mental health challenges. Thus, it is critical that National Societies provide targeted mental health support for young volunteers.

To better understand the mental health needs of young volunteers, especially Red Cross volunteers, it is important to have reliable and comprehensive data on the issue. An annual survey like this one provides valuable insights into the prevalence of mental health challenges among volunteers, as well as the resources and support available to them. By tracking our progress over time, we can identify areas where further support may be needed and develop strategies to strengthen mental health services for our volunteers.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has recognized the critical importance of mental health in the overall health and well-being of volunteers, and has developed a global strategy for 2030 that emphasizes the need for psychosocial support and care for volunteers and staff. Strategy 2030 emphasizes the importance of promoting resilience, health, and well-being, which includes mental health. Indeed, it is essential to support volunteers, as they are often victims of the crises they are aiding with.

This strategy highlights the importance of promoting mental health and psychosocial well-being for young volunteers in the Americas and beyond, and seeks to strengthen the capacity of National Societies to provide such support. By prioritizing mental health in this way, the IFRC is helping to ensure that young volunteers in the Americas have the resources and support they need to stay healthy and engaged in their important work. That being said, measuring, evaluating and revising our strategies - with the vital feedback of volunteers- is an essential way to reach our goal.

DISCUSSION

HOW ARE WE ADDRESSING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH NOW? OUR POLICIES

The IFRC is committed to keeping the utmost standard for youth volunteers, their integrity and health, including their mental health. It is important to work with and understand the policies in place now. Below are some IFRC policies related to youth and volunteer mental health.

Child Protection Policy: The IFRC has a Child Protection Policy that aims to protect children from harm and promote their rights and well-being. The policy includes guidelines for preventing and responding to child abuse and exploitation, as well as procedures for reporting and responding to incidents. The policy also emphasizes the importance of creating a safe and supportive environment for children, including training and awareness-raising for staff and volunteers.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Policy: The IFRC has a Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Policy that recognizes the importance of addressing the psychological and social needs of individuals affected by emergencies and disasters. The policy includes guidelines for providing MHPSS services, including the importance of ensuring that services are culturally appropriate and respectful of individual rights and dignity. The policy also emphasizes the importance of ensuring that MHPSS services are integrated into emergency response and recovery efforts.

Code of Conduct: The IFRC has a Code of Conduct that outlines the ethical principles and standards expected of its staff and volunteers. The code includes provisions related to the protection of children and vulnerable individuals, including a prohibition on any form of exploitation, abuse, or harassment. The code also emphasizes the importance of respecting individual rights and promoting their dignity, including the right to access MHPSS services.

Volunteer Management Policy: The IFRC has a Volunteer Management Policy that outlines the principles and standards for managing its volunteers. The policy includes guidelines for ensuring that volunteers are provided with a safe and supportive environment, including access to training, support, and resources to promote their well-being. The policy also emphasizes the importance of ensuring that volunteers are appropriately screened and trained, including in the areas of child protection and MHPSS.

DISCUSSION

HOW ARE WE ADDRESSING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH?

The IFRC coordinates and supports the work of national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, including those in the Americas. Here are some IFRC mental health resources available to youth volunteers of the Red Cross:

IFRC Psychosocial Support: The IFRC provides psychosocial support services to individuals affected by emergencies and disasters. This includes providing emotional support, referrals to mental health services, and community-based psychosocial activities. Youth volunteers can access these services for themselves or to help others in need.

Psychological First Aid (PFA) Training: The IFRC offers PFA training to volunteers and staff, which teaches individuals how to provide basic psychological support in emergencies. PFA training can help youth volunteers feel more confident in providing emotional support to those affected by disasters and other emergencies.

Youth in Emergencies: The IFRC has a Youth in Emergencies program, which aims to engage and empower young people in disaster and emergency preparedness and response. This program provides training and resources to help youth volunteers develop their skills and contribute to their communities' resilience.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Network (MHPSS): The MHPSS Network is a global network of organizations and individuals working to promote mental health and psychosocial well-being in humanitarian settings. The network provides resources, guidance, and support for those working in the field, including youth volunteers.

Youth Engagement Strategy: The IFRC has a Youth Engagement Strategy, which aims to increase youth participation and leadership within the organization. This includes providing opportunities for youth volunteers to contribute to decision-making processes and programs, and supporting their personal and professional development.

DISCUSSION

HOW ARE WE ADDRESSING VOLUNTEER MENTAL HEALTH AT A NATIONAL SOCIETY LEVEL?

It is important to note that we conducted a survey over a large region, consisting of 35 National Societies, to gather information on mental health resources provided by National Societies at a regional level. It is important to note that National Societies may not all approach mental health services in the same way. At a National Society level, Red Crosses may offer different services for their volunteers. Here are some examples of National Society-specific mental health programs across the Americas:

Red Cross Wellness and Support Line: The Canadian Red Cross has a Wellness and Support Line that offers confidential support to volunteers and staff who may be struggling with mental health concerns. The support line provides access to a licensed professional counselor and other resources.

The Brazilian Red Cross offers a program called "Listening to the Little Ones," which aims to promote the psychosocial well-being of children and adolescents through play-based activities and group therapy sessions.

The Colombian Red Cross provides a program called "Happy Heart," which offers emotional support to children and adolescents affected by violence or armed conflict. The program includes counseling, group therapy, and art therapy sessions.

The Chilean Red Cross has a program called "Emotional Well-being for Adolescents," which focuses on providing mental health support to young people aged 12 to 18. The program includes group therapy sessions, peer support groups, and workshops on topics such as stress management and communication skills.

These are just a few examples of the many resources available in Red Crosses across the Americas to address youth mental health. Each National Society may have its own unique programs and services based on the specific needs of its community.

DISCUSSION

Where do you go from here? Looking forward to improving volunteer mental health care.

The results from this study help us identify, at a general level, our successes and our weaknesses in our current Mental Health strategy. Moving forward, the Red Cross and other organizations must address the specific challenges faced by young volunteers in the Americas and work towards integrating the knowledge gained from this study by promoting mental health and well-being in their operations. Based on the knowledge gained from the study, the following next steps are recommended:

01

FOSTER A SUPPORTIVE TEAM ENVIRONMENT:

The IFRC should encourage Red Cross teams to create a supportive team environment, where volunteers feel comfortable seeking help and discussing mental health issues.

02

INCREASE TRAINING AND ITS VISIBILITY:

Strategy 2030 includes a commitment to providing targeted support to volunteers, including training on mental health awareness, stress management, and burnout prevention. The IFRC can increase training and support for volunteers in the Americas, including online resources, peer support groups, and training programs for staff and volunteers. It is important that these resources are also visible and that volunteers are aware how to access them.

NEXT STEPS

03

IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION:

The regional study of mental health perceptions in young volunteers in the Americas highlights the need for improved data collection on volunteer mental health to better understand the mental health needs of volunteers and identify areas for improvement. The IFRC and National Societies can work to improve data collection on volunteer mental health to better target resources and support in a way that is tailored to each National Society.

04

TARGETED SUPPORT FOR YOUTH

In this study, respondents told us some of the best ways to reach youth, including in-person support and the use of social media to help make mental health resources more visible. This information is vital to make sure we can reach youth and make them aware of the resources available to them.

DISCUSSION: LIMITATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

It is important to note that mental health policies are a continuous **work in progress** and must consistently rely on feedback from volunteers to ensure that the right needs are being addressed in the right way. It is crucial to adopt a **person-centered approach** to mental health support and ensure that volunteers have access to the necessary resources and support systems to maintain their well-being while serving their communities.

As the study was conducted across a vast region, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. The data collected may not reflect the entire region's situation, and the study's findings cannot be generalized to all young volunteers in the Americas. It is important to acknowledge the uneven participation between all National Societies. Therefore, further and more targeted and specific data collection is necessary to better understand the mental health challenges faced by young volunteers in this region.



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Survey for Perceptions of Mental Health in Young Volunteers sheds light on the challenges faced by Red Cross volunteers in the Americas with a special focus on youth. The results highlight the urgent need for targeted mental health support for volunteers, especially given the high prevalence of mental health issues in the region. Here are three key highlights of the study:

Team support is crucial

Most respondents said that being listened to by their team was one of the key ways they felt supported. This underscores the need for National Societies to prioritize mental health support for volunteers and ensure that teams are equipped to provide this support.

Resources should be visible

More than 40% of respondents did not know how to access Red Cross resources related to mental health. This highlights the need to make resources visible and accessible.

Targeted support for youth

The survey highlights the unique challenges faced by young volunteers, which may require specific resources targeted for them.

The IFRC Strategy 2030 emphasizes the importance of promoting resilience, health, and well-being, including mental health, and the survey's findings support the need for Red Cross organizations to prioritize mental health support for volunteers in line with Strategy 2030.

REFERENCES

- American Psychological Association. (2019). Mental Health of Volunteers. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/topics/volunteers-mental-health>
- Breslau, J., Marshall, G. N., Pincus, H. A., & Brown, N. L. (1986). Are mental health services utilized by volunteers? Results from a national survey. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(4), 366-377.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). Mental Health in the Americas. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/features/mental-health-americas/index.html>
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2017). Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies: IFRC Guidelines for Field Workers. Geneva: IFRC. Retrieved from <https://www.ifrc.org/global/assets/mental-health-psychosocial-support-in-emergencies.pdf>
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2019). Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Youth Volunteers: Guidance for National Societies. Geneva: IFRC. Retrieved from <https://www.ifrc.org/global/assets/mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-for-youth-volunteers-guidance-for-national-societies-2019.pdf>
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2020). Strategy 2030: Together We Can. Geneva: IFRC. Retrieved from https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/11/IFRC_Strategy2030_EN_WEB.pdf
- Pan American Health Organization. (2019). Mental Health Atlas of the Americas 2019. Retrieved from https://iris.paho.org/bitstream/handle/10665.2/49689/9789275120833_eng.pdf?sequence=9&isAllowed=y
- Southwick, S. M., & Charney, D. S. (2012). Resilience: The science of mastering life's greatest challenges. Cambridge University Press.
- Stamm, B. H. (Ed.). (2010). Secondary traumatic stress: Self-care issues for clinicians, researchers, and educators (2nd ed.). Sidran Press.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2020). COVID-19 and Human Development: Assessing the Crisis, Envisioning the Recovery. Retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/covid-19_and_human_development_0.pdf
- United Nations Development Programme. (2021). Poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean. Retrieved from <https://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2021/poverty-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean.html>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTACT

Authors: The ICVD Network of Experts: Mental Health Working Group, IFRC
For any inquiries please contact: Milena Chacon, Luciana Escobar Saade

Special thanks to the regional teams for distributing the survey and to the volunteers and staff who answered.



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES | MENTAL HEALTH PERCEPTIONS REPORT 2022

APPENDIX

Category Description: Question 4

“Name 3 Challenges to Mental Health from Your Role”

Hostile Work Environment:
Dismissal of concerns from management, lack of support
Lack of resources for managing emotional or mental health challenges
Lack of activities/training related to mental health at the institutional level
Inappropriate or demeaning actions from co-workers
Perceived stigma or taboo around mental health both within the Red Cross and in their communities.
Improper work/life balance or unrealistically high work hours or work-related expectations
Feeling underappreciated for their work
Work-related factors:
Dealing with high-stress emergency situations
Trauma from work-related activities
Dealing with death at work, hostility from beneficiaries or members of the communities they are trying to help
Feeling unprepared to handle the demands of their job
Feeling that they are not doing enough
Challenges from their daily functions
Burnout:
Description of mental or physical fatigue that interferes with their daily life or job functions.
Mental Health/ Emotional Challenges:
Dealing with diagnosed Mental Health conditions including anxiety, PTSD, depression, bipolar disorder, etc.
Experiencing emotional symptoms including sadness, anger, frustration, and anxiety even if these are not associated with a diagnosis.
External factors:
Challenges that are not directly related to their job, including family, dealing with a second job, lack of exercise or time to socialize, or economic concerns.
It is to be noted that many mentioned that these problems arise as a result of the low-pay, inconsistent hours, or uncertainty of the future that is brought from their jobs at the Red Cross.
Living in areas with high crime incidence
Social:
Feelings of isolation, both due to personality factors (shyness, nervousness) as well as remote work, COVID, or other protocols.
Feeling a lack of communication or companionship overall from team members.
Feeling that there are not enough team debriefs, particularly in the face of traumatic situations that are experienced on the job.

APPENDIX

Category description Q12:

Resources:
- There were no resources provided at the Red Cross to help, or the resources available were deemed as either insufficient or inappropriate.
- They did not find the correct ways to seek for help or did not feel safe enough to communicate their concerns.
Therapy:
- Therapy or professional help was discontinued by either party before end of treatment.
- There was no appropriate follow-up.
- The therapist-client relationship was poor or perceived as unhelpful or negative.
Other/Outside Red Cross:
- The experience occurred outside the Red Cross
- The experience did not fit the other criteria therein.
Dismissal:
- Mental health concerns were dismissed by staff/ colleagues or both.
- In this case, a second subcategory: "Work environment" described those that not only felt dismissed, but that felt that their reaching for help negatively affected their job or relationships, or that the staff/workers were demeaning, did not keep confidentiality, or otherwise responded negatively (beyond dismissal) of their concerns.

APPENDIX

Category description Q21

Age-Related Concerns:
- There are specific societal, work, and cultural factors that affect the youth today (social media, etc.)
- There is still strong stigma in many countries that prevents youth from sharing their concerns
- Youth today are resilient and face specific challenges (ie. The pandemic), and still it is important that youth are not demeaned or belittled in their mental health concerns because of their age.
- Youth would like leaders to know that mental health problems are likely more common than they think.
Life effects:
- Mental health affects life. From job performance, to hobbies, to connections with coworkers, to overall satisfaction with life. Mental health care also has a positive effect on these things.
- Ultimately, mental health affects a person's personal and professional development and affects their ability to flourish in the future.
Team/companionship:
- As leaders and members of the Red Cross, it is important to be sensitive, empathetic and aware of our colleagues and their mental health.
- Improving companionship will allow people to feel safe to share their mental health concerns.
We need more support:
- We need to improve and make resources for mental health more accessible to youth. Training in the matter should also be given to staff so that they are able to provide the appropriate support and guidance.
- Youth don't always have the answers, so it is important that we are better able to provide them the tools to navigate life and work.
- Leaders would also like to be more trained in early identification and how to properly intervene.
Mental Health takes many shapes and forms:
- Just as individuals are unique, so are their struggles, emotions, and perspectives. It is important that resources and interventions consider these individual differences. In addition, it is also important to educate each other on these differences so that we are better able to recognize and empathize with each other.
- This is also particularly important related to the fact that some people may seem well and productive on the outside, or not voice their concerns, but may in fact be suffering.
- In addition, this alludes to the idea that individual differences should be considered and accommodated for.
- May youth also have trouble expressing their concerns.
It is important:

APPENDIX

It is important:
- It is important to increase the visibility of mental health care and to foster empathy not only in the general population, but in the staff and colleagues who are part of our day-to-day life.
- Our close environment, feeling judged or unsafe to share our concerns can be extremely detrimental to mental health.
- It is important that mental health be an important consideration as well in terms of resource allocation and workload at each Red Cross branch.
- Mental health is health.
- In this category we included answers where dissatisfaction was expressed.