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Survey on the Mental Well-being of Civil Servants in Montenegro



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DIET



AROMATHERAPY



ACHIEVABLE
GOALS



SENSE OF
BELONGING



STRESS
MANAGEMENT



HERBAL
MEDICINE



OPTIMISTIC
OUTLOOK



PERSONAL
GROWTH



TAI CHI



MEDITATION



NUTRITION



GOOD SLEEP



RELATIONSHIP



SELF-CARE



SPIRITUALITY



MASSAGE



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for

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The Regional School for Public Administration (ReSPA) is an inter-governmental organisation for enhancing regional cooperation, promoting shared learning and supporting the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. As such, it helps governments in the region develop better public administration, public services and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses and prepare them for membership and integration into the European Union (EU). The ReSPA members are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, while Kosovo* is a beneficiary.

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* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and ICJ opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of independence.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ReSPA	Regional School of Public Administration
p	Statistical significance
**	Statistical significance at the 0.01 level
*	Statistical significance at the 0.05 level
M	Arithmetic mean

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research on the mental well-being of civil servants was conducted to gain insight into the actual state of well-being of civil servants in Montenegro and identify factors in the work environment that affect mental well-being. A specific goal of the research is to develop various corrective measures for enhancing mental well-being through various personal and professional development activities based on the data obtained. The research has contributed to expanding civil servants' knowledge of mental well-being. After answering the questions, respondents received detailed descriptions of the components of mental well-being and interpretations of their responses as feedback. This contributed to raising awareness about the importance of mental well-being.

The research also contributed to the culture that promotes openness to mental well-being, reduces stigma, and encourages employees to share their experiences and seek help when needed. Periodically conducting surveys and interviews with employees to understand their overall well-being and satisfaction in the workplace will further assist in creating better working conditions and providing support to employees.

Of the 14,556 civil servants in Montenegro, 838 participated in the mental well-being survey, representing 5.78%.²

The overall mental well-being is represented as the sum of scores obtained from three components: emotional, social, and psychological. In a sample of 838 respondents whose responses were processed, the overall mental well-being of civil servants in Montenegro is 3.50 (Figure 1).



Figure 1: The average rating for overall mental well-being of civil servants in Montenegro

Emotional well-being is measured based on responses regarding the presence or absence of work-induced positive emotions. As seen in the results, respondents generally have positive feelings regarding their work, and the average rating of the emotional well-being of civil servants is 3.38, which indicates that this component is slightly above average (Figure 2).

² This sample size corresponds to a marginal error of 4.32% and a confidence level of 99%.

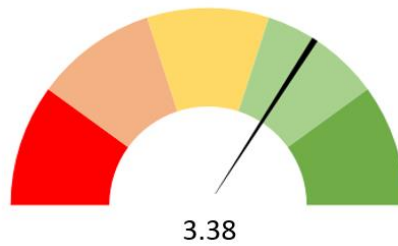


Figure 2: The average rating for the emotional well-being of civil servants in Montenegro

Social well-being encompasses an individual's ability to adapt and integrate into their social and/or work environment, connect with others, feel a sense of belonging to a collective, enjoy an atmosphere of mutual affection, respect, and trust in interactions with colleagues. Based on the self-assessment of respondents' social well-being, the average rating of social well-being is 3.36, indicating that this component is slightly above the average value (Figure 3).

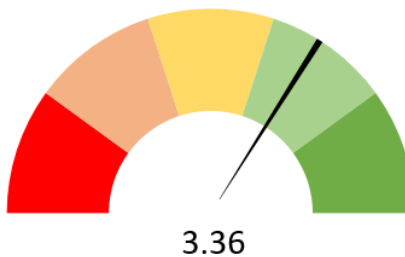


Figure 3: The average rating for the social well-being of civil servants in Montenegro

Psychological well-being involves self-acceptance, meaning self-love and valuing one's being despite being aware of one's limitations and shortcomings. The average rating of the psychological well-being of civil servants is 3.74, which is slightly higher than other aspects of mental well-being (Figure 4).

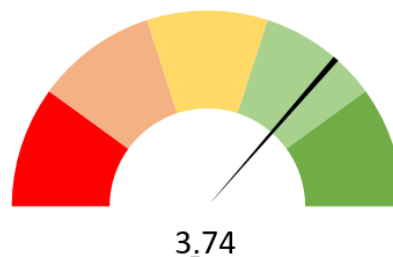


Figure 4: The average rating for the psychological well-being of civil servants in Montenegro

By comparing the results based on gender, age, location of employment, job position, marital status, financial status, and health status, differences in the overall level of mental well-being among different participant groups were identified. It was found that there are no differences in mental well-being based on gender, age, and location of employment. However, whether

someone is in a managerial position or not significantly affects the social and psychological components of well-being, with individuals in managerial positions experiencing higher levels of well-being. When comparing responses from employees in different institutions, the survey shows no differences in the overall mental well-being of civil servants in ministries, local municipalities, government agencies, regulatory and independent authorities. Significant differences exist among respondents based on their financial and health status, with higher well-being levels among civil servants who rated their status as good or very good. The research also revealed no differences among respondents based on their marital status. However, significant differences were found based on how they rated the quality of their relationship. Respondents who were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of their relationship had higher levels of well-being.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mental well-being represents a crucial and determining condition for the health of every individual. It affects social relationships, work performance, the ability to take care of oneself and others, and the capacity to make sound business and life decisions. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as "complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease." The word "well-being," as a synonym for "prosperity" (from Latin "*prosperitas*" meaning "successful growth"), in the broadest sense, signifies a state of development, success, and happiness.

The concept of mental well-being encompasses the unity of emotional, social, and psychological well-being. Individuals who achieve the entirety of mental well-being are more resilient to stress, fulfil their potential, are more productive, and contribute more to their community.

Impaired mental well-being can lead to substance abuse, hasten the onset of other health problems, hinder an individual's ability to fit into a collective, result in social exclusion, and even lead to self-harm and suicide.

The work and the work environment where civil servants spend a substantial time of their lives significantly affect their mental state, either positively or negatively. The consequences of poor mental well-being of individuals spread to their immediate and broader environment, and the more such individuals there are, the greater the burden on the community and society. Therefore, it is essential to identify work-related factors and the work environment that promotes or endangers the mental well-being of employees.

Considering this, the survey "Mental well-being of civil servants" was conducted in Serbia in October 2022. In 2023, ReSPA conducted a regional survey on the same topic in other ReSPA members that expressed interest in this initiative, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia. Regional research provided additional cross-cultural data, which will establish a strong foundation for taking action to improve well-being. The regional research focuses on civil servants' mental well-being, including their emotional, social, and psychological well-being.

This report contains the research results involving civil servants from Montenegro and recommendations for improving their well-being.

2. SURVEY RESULTS ON EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

The survey was conducted online using a specially designed questionnaire completed by 838 civil servants employed in Montenegro. The questions in the questionnaire pertained to the domains of emotional, social, and psychological well-being, and participants provided self-assessments in their responses. The survey was carried out in September 2023.

2.1. The emotional component of well-being

In the section related to this well-being component, the questionnaire contained ten statements in which respondents expressed their degree of agreement or disagreement and one open-ended question. The following chart depicts the degree of agreement with the statements from the questionnaire expressed in percentages (Figure 5).

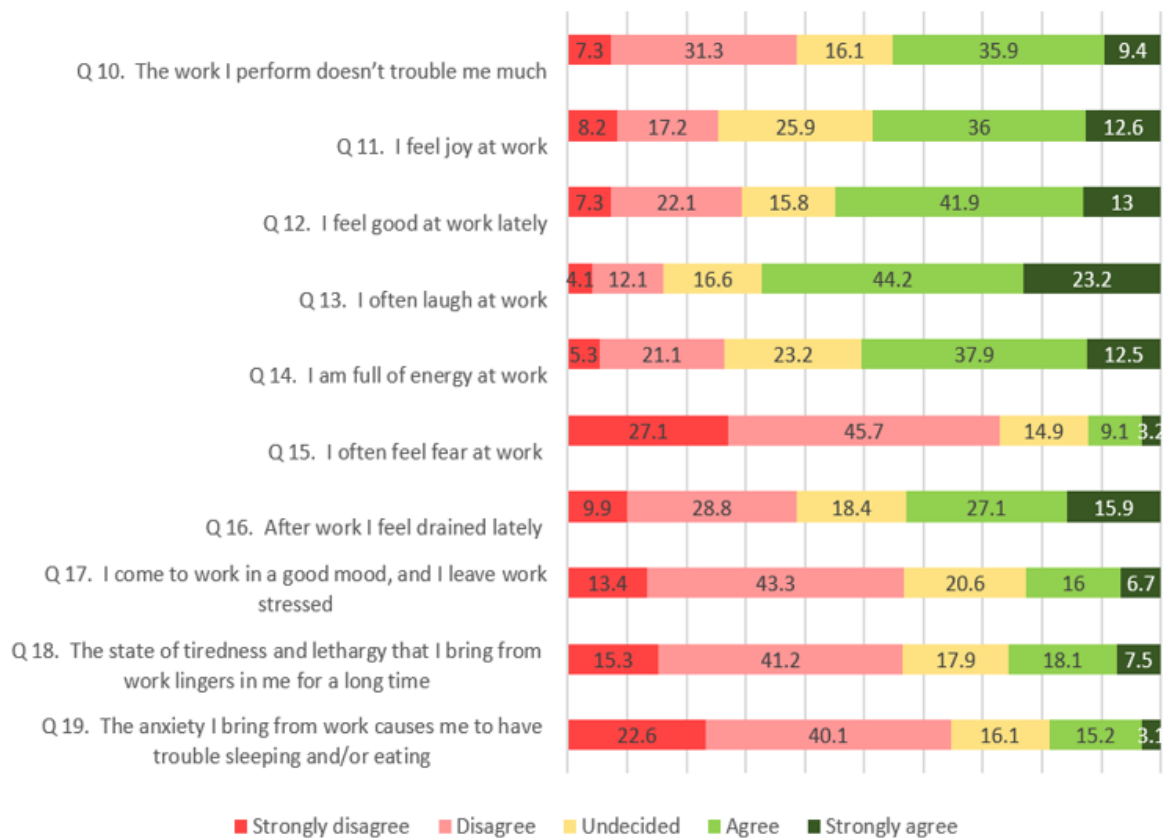


Figure 5: Assessment of the emotional well-being

It is encouraging that the vast majority of respondents agree or strongly agree that they often laugh at work (67.4%). The percentage of respondents expressing fear at work is 14.2%, while 43% of respondents feel drained after work.

Based on the content analysis of the responses to the first open-ended question, "How would you describe the mood you bring to work?" the following dominant themes were identified and

categorised as "positive feelings," "neutral and borderline feelings," and "negative feelings" (Figure 6).

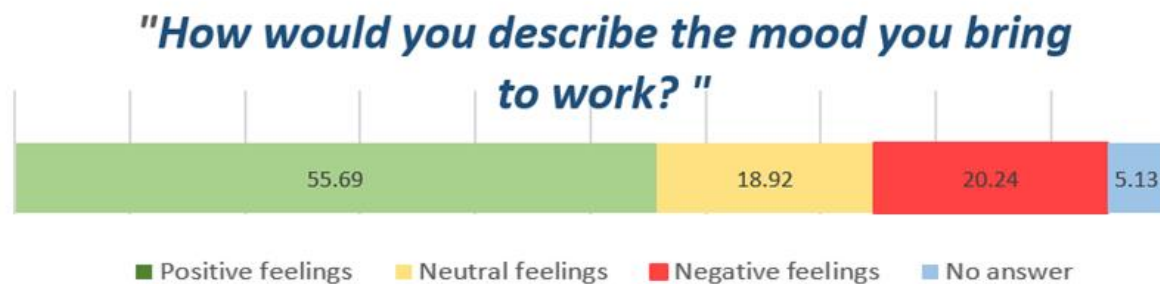


Figure 6: Responses to the first open-ended question from the questionnaire

Responses under the first code, "positive feelings," had the highest frequency. A total of 465 respondents described the mood they bring to work in a positive way, which accounts for 55.69% of the responses. They used terms such as carefree, energetic, well, satisfied, confident, enthusiastic, nice, excellent, optimistic, relaxed, eager, positive, joyful, relaxed, solid, cheerful, lively, happy, and I love my job.

Responses coded as "negative feelings" have a lower frequency, with 169 respondents or 20.24% of the answers expressing this sentiment. However, they were very precise in describing their feelings, citing anxiety, apathy, lack of enthusiasm, depressive feelings, boredom, tension, dissatisfaction, and fatigue. They also compare their negative feelings to unpleasant physiological states (stomach cramps or a lump in the throat) or unpleasant situations (going to prison). Interestingly, many attribute their bad mood to sleepiness or lack of sleep.

"Neutral feelings" have the lowest frequency, with 158 respondents, accounting for 18.92% of the responses. These are responses from participants who describe the feelings they bring to work as normal, average, variable, without specific emotions, dependent on the day and circumstances.

Forty-three respondents did not answer this question.

2.2. The social component of well-being

The questionnaire for measuring social well-being contained ten statements, and the responses provided data on social inclusion, social actualisation, and social contribution. The following chart depicts the degree of agreement with the statements from the questionnaire expressed in percentages (Figure 7).

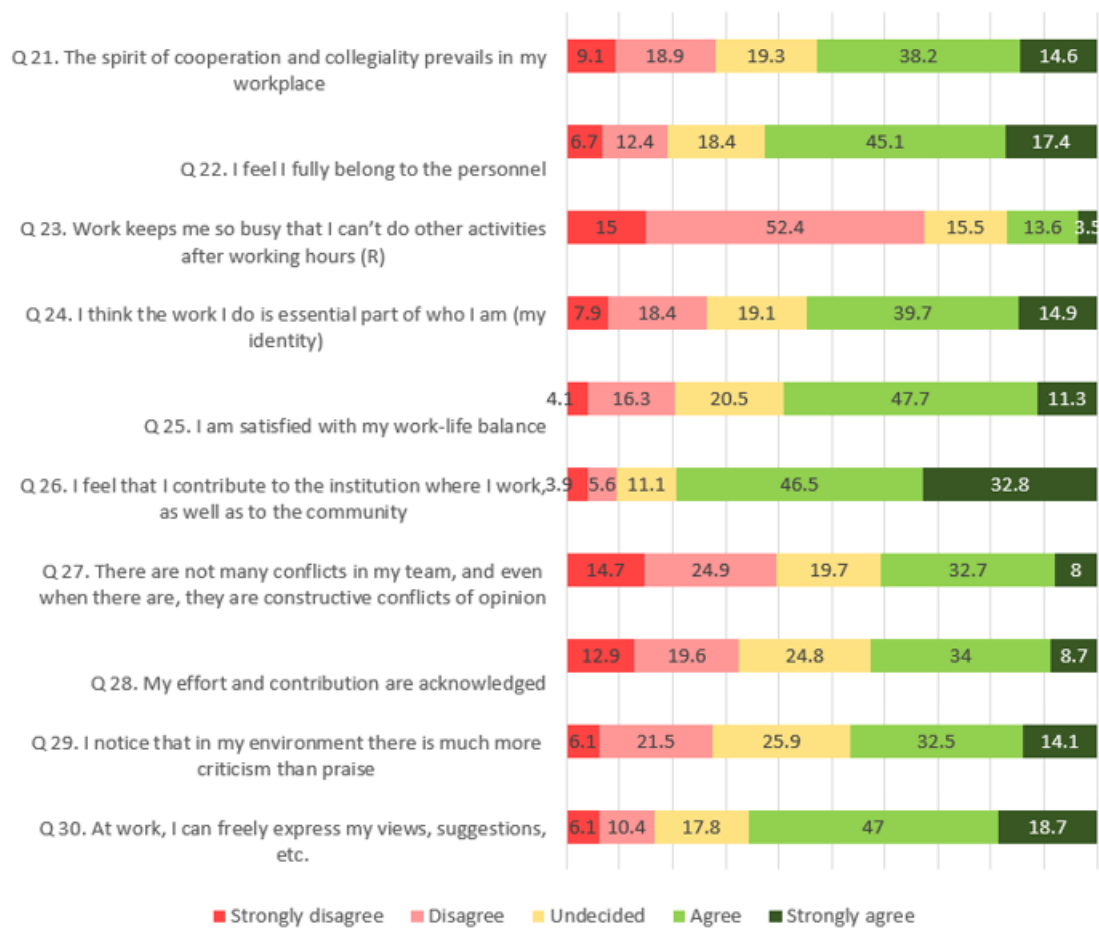


Figure 7: Assessment of the social well-being

A total of 79.3% of civil servants feel that they contribute to the institution they work for and the broader community, and 66.9% of them agree with the statement that they feel a sense of belonging to the collective.

The questionnaire also includes one open-ended question in this section. Based on the content analysis of the responses to the second open-ended question, "In your opinion, what are the most common causes of tension and conflict at work?" the following dominant themes were identified and coded: "political influence", "social interaction", "professional (in)competence", "financial reasons", and "social perception" (Figure 8).

The highest frequency is for "social interaction", which is 43.20% of the responses. Here, general descriptions prevail: poor organisation and division of work, interpersonal relationships, poor communication, misunderstandings, and lack of collegiality.

Under "social perception", 26.25% of the responses attribute the cause of tensions to some personal traits of colleagues, such as ego, vanity, arrogance, intolerance, and the like.

Some respondents attribute the cause to the "professional (in)competence" of colleagues (5.85%). Participants report the following experiences: ignorance, incompetence, lack of knowledge about the workflow and procedures, lack of knowledge, skills, and managerial abilities, poor education of superiors, and a shortage of expert personnel.

A total of 19 respondents (2.27%) cite politics, political employment, political affiliation, and the current political situation as the reasons for tension. The same number of responses, 19, is found in the category of "financial reasons". These responses make up 2.27% of the total,

and the reasons mentioned include discussions about salaries, poor financial situations, money, and dissatisfaction with salary, variables, and participation in projects. 12.89 % of respondents stated that they had not experienced any tensions or conflicts in their workplace. The question was not answered by 45 respondents.

In your opinion, what are the most common causes of tension and conflict at work?



Figure 8: Responses to the second open-ended question from the questionnaire

2.3. The psychological component of well-being

To measure the psychological component of well-being, the questionnaire contains ten statements, and the responses provide data on self-efficacy, personal growth and development, self-evaluation, and a sense of autonomy. Figure 9 depicts the degree of agreement with the statements from the questionnaire expressed in percentages.

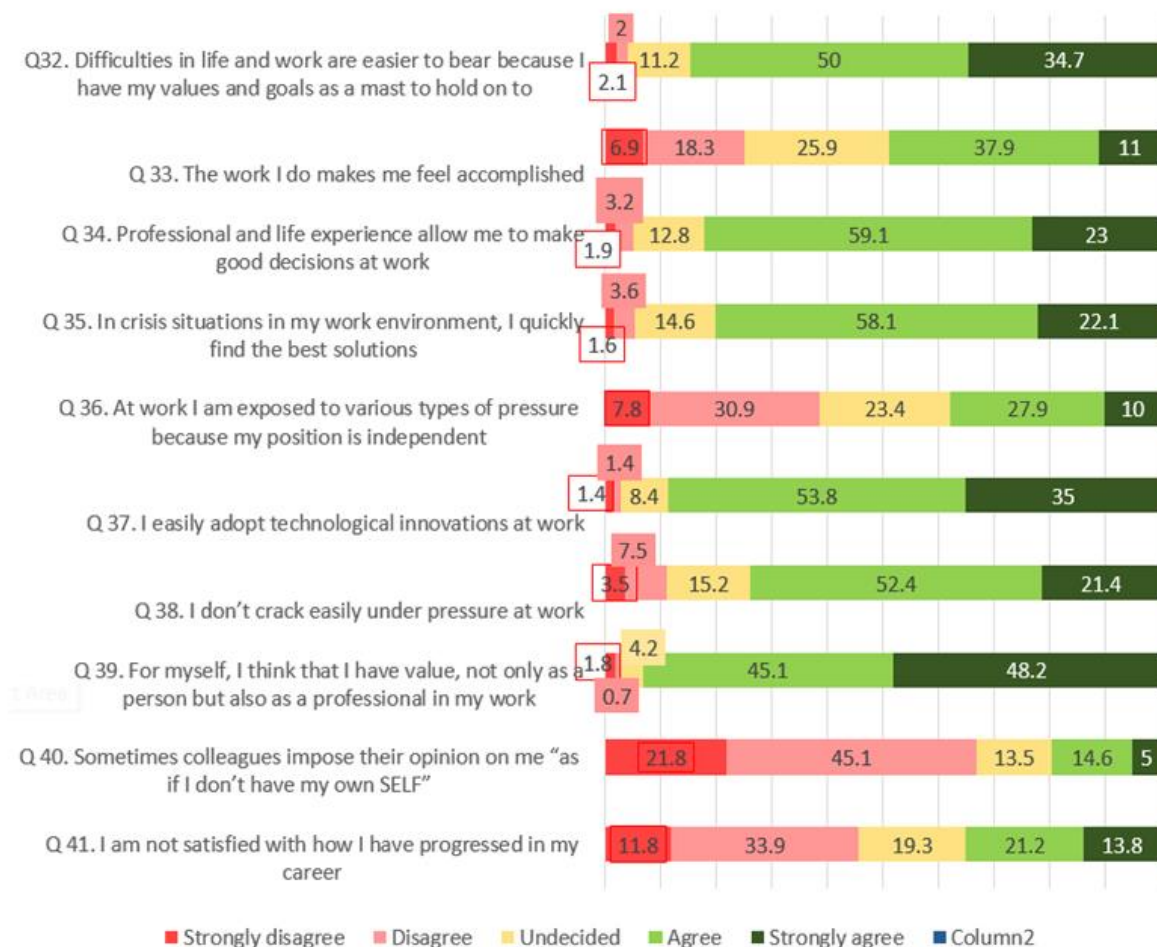


Figure 9: Assessment of the psychological well-being

The majority, 93.3% of the respondents, have a strong sense of their worth as individuals and professionals. Additionally, 88.8% claim to easily adapt to technological innovations at work.

The questionnaire also includes one open-ended question in this section. Based on the analysis of the content of the third open-ended question, *Describe your relationship with superiors (Do you have problems with superiors or the superiors have problems with you)*; the following dominant themes were identified and coded as: a problem originating from the employee, "a problem within me," "a problem with authority," and "a respectful relationship" (Figure 10).

The code "a respectful relationship" has the highest frequency, indicating a good relationship between employees and superiors (authorities), as employees perceive this relationship as good, satisfactory, or respectful, and professional with full respect. This type of response was provided by 630 respondents, accounting for 75.18% of all responses.

Negative experiences were reported by 99 participants (11.81%), and they most commonly state that they do not have a problem with authority in general but rather with specific managers who are: lacking in understanding, frequently changing and coming without experience, egotistical, unwilling to accept different opinions, unable to handle criticism, incompetent, or in some other way not authoritative for them.

The third code, "problem within myself," has the lowest frequency. Only 33 participants (3.94%) identified reasons for internal conflicts. They often mention having an aversion to all types of authority. Some are wary of authority, or they believe they are too lenient towards it. They say they have a problem with themselves or assume that they are not doing something correctly.

A total of 76 participants (9.07%) did not provide any answer to this question or gave an answer from which the nature of that relationship cannot be concluded.

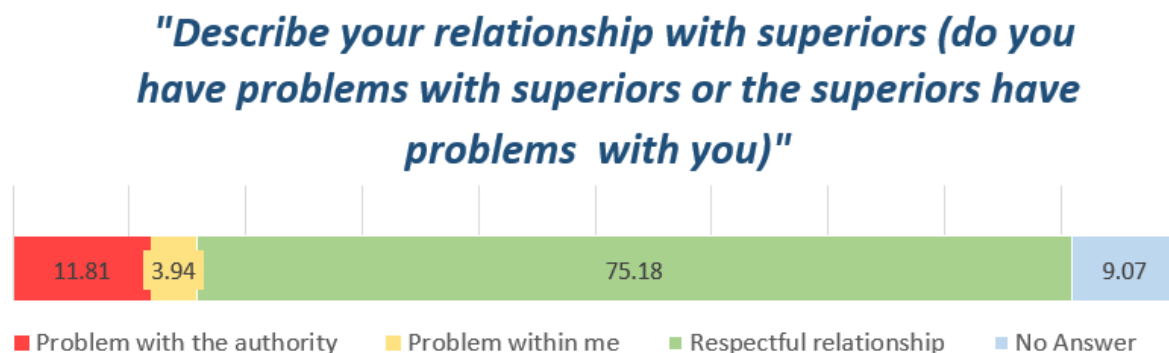


Figure 10: Responses to the third open-ended question from the questionnaire

3. SURVEY RESULTS ON SOCIOECONOMIC STATUSES

The content of this chapter provides insight into the mental well-being of participants of different socioeconomic statuses. To determine if differences exist in the levels of well-being components among specific groups of participants, comparisons were conducted based on gender, age, location, employment position, marital status, material, and health conditions.

3.1 Gender and mental well-being

Based on the recorded values, the mental well-being of all participants is at an average level or moderately above average, and gender differences are not significant (Table 1).

	Sample result	Gender			p
		Female	Male	I prefer not to say	
Emotional component	3.38	3.39	3.37	3.29	
Social component	3.36	3.35	3.39	3.34	
Psychological component	3.74	3.75	3.73	3.59	
Mental well-being	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.41	
Segment size		69.0%	29.1%	1.9%	

Table 1. Gender and mental well-being

3.2 Age and mental well-being

There are no significant differences in mental well-being among individuals of different age groups (Table 2).

	Sample result	Age					p
		Up to 30 years	31 - 40	41 - 50	51 - 60	61 years and older	
Emotional component	3.38	3.42	3.36	3.38	3.37	3.49	
Social component	3.36	3.42	3.33	3.38	3.34	3.45	
Psychological component	3.74	3.68	3.72	3.75	3.80	3.89	
Mental well-being	3.50	3.51	3.47	3.50	3.50	3.61	
Segment size		12.3%	43.3%	26.5%	13.2%	4.7%	

Table 2. Age and mental well-being

3.3 Location of employment and mental well-being

The research has shown no statistically significant difference in the well-being of civil servants based on their location (Table 3a, Table 3b). Individually, by cities, civil servants in Mojkovac and Cetinje have the highest level of overall mental well-being and well-being across all components. However, there are differences only in the emotional well-being component among respondents working in ministries, local self-governments, and other bodies (Table 4). Employees in ministries and local municipalities have a higher level of emotional well-being than those employed in other institutions and organisations. Furthermore, differences were observed among civil servants in managerial positions and those who are not, with higher levels of well-being achieved by civil servants in managerial roles. Among managers, there are no statistically significant differences based on whether they are officials, position holders, or managers of a narrower scope (Table 5 and Table 6).

	Sample result	Location of employment									
		Podgorica	Danilovgrad	Tivat	Rožaje	Budva	Pljevlja	Plužine	Cetinje	Bijelo Polje	Nikšić
Emotional component	3.38	3.38	3.40	3.24	3.16	3.47	2.36	2.00	3.90	3.46	3.37
Social component	3.36	3.33	2.45	3.62	3.19	3.45	3.16	3.10	3.81	3.66	3.61
Psychological component	3.74	3.73	2.85	3.93	3.49	3.79	3.59	2.90	3.94	3.81	3.90
Mental well-being	3.50	3.48	2.90	3.60	3.28	3.57	3.03	2.67	3.89	3.65	3.63
Segment size		82.9%	0.2%	2.0%	0.8%	2.6%	0.8%	0.1%	1.1%	1.7%	1.3%

Table 3a. Location of employment and mental well-being

	Sample result	Location of employment							p
		Kolašin	Bar	Berane	Herceg Novi	Kotor	Žabljak	Mojkovac	
Emotional component	3.38	3.77	3.28	3.10	3.44	3.82	3.10	4.10	*
Social component	3.36	3.60	3.42	3.59	3.42	3.33	3.50	4.30	
Psychological component	3.74	3.92	3.88	3.77	3.82	4.00	4.20	4.20	
Mental well-being	3.50	3.76	3.53	3.49	3.56	3.72	3.60	4.20	
Segment size		1.4%	0.6%	0.8%	2.4%	0.7%	0.2%	0.1%	

Table 3b. Location of employment and mental well-being

	Sample result	Organization/Institution of employment			p
		Ministries	Other body within a ministry. Government Agencies. Regulatory and Independent authorities	Local Municipalities	
Emotional component	3.38	3.45	3.28	3.42	**
Social component	3.36	3.39	3.30	3.45	
Psychological component	3.74	3.73	3.74	3.81	
Mental well-being	3.50	3.53	3.44	3.56	
Segment size		51.9%	39.3%	8.8%	

Table 4. Organisation/institution of employment and mental well-being

	Sample result	Do you do management work?		p
		Yes	No	
Emotional component	3.38	3.40	3.37	
Social component	3.36	3.48	3.33	**
Psychological component	3.74	3.84	3.71	**
Mental well-being	3.50	3.58	3.47	*
Segment size		22.7%	77.3%	

Table 5. Managerial Position in the Organization and Respondents' mental well-being

	Sample result	Please indicate whether you are			p
		Senior managerial staff	Heads of administrative bodies	Expert-managerial staff	
Emotional component	3.38	3.46	3.49	3.37	
Social component	3.36	3.54	3.54	3.48	
Psychological component	3.74	3.77	4.00	3.85	
Mental well-being	3.50	3.59	3.67	3.56	
Segment size		16.8%	14.7%	68.6%	

Table 6. Management of an organisational unit and mental well-being

3.4 Marital status and mental well-being

There are no statistically significant differences in mental well-being among respondents with different marital statuses (Table 7). However, for those who are in a relationship, it has been shown that a higher level of relationship satisfaction is associated with higher mental well-being. An interesting finding is that out of the total number of respondents in a relationship (comprising 63% of all civil servants participating in the study), as many as 89.6% are satisfied or very satisfied with the relationship quality. Very dissatisfied respondents account for 1.1%, and 3% are dissatisfied (Table 8).

	Sample result	Marital status					p
		Single	Married	Non-marital partnership	Divorced	Widow/widower	
Emotional component	3.38	3.33	3.39	3.38	3.57	3.39	
Social component	3.36	3.37	3.36	3.30	3.35	3.50	
Psychological component	3.74	3.70	3.76	3.72	3.80	3.91	
Mental well-being	3.50	3.47	3.50	3.47	3.57	3.60	
Segment size		29.6%	56.0%	7.0%	5.5%	1.9%	

Table 7. Marital status and mental well-being

	Sample result	How would you rate the quality of your partner relationship?					p
		I am very dissatisfied	I am not satisfied	I cannot decide	I am satisfied	I am very satisfied	
Emotional component	3.38	3.18	3.49	3.18	3.31	3.48	*
Social component	3.36	3.05	3.39	3.17	3.35	3.39	
Psychological component	3.74	3.42	3.71	3.42	3.73	3.84	**
Mental well-being	3.50	3.22	3.53	3.26	3.46	3.57	**
Segment size		1.1%	3.0%	6.3%	42.7%	46.9%	

Table 8. Quality of partner relationship and mental well-being

3.5 Financial Status and mental well-being

As expected, a relationship between financial status and mental well-being has been demonstrated. Those who have good or very good financial status achieve a higher level of mental well-being, while the lowest level is observed among employees who rated their financial status as very poor (Table 9).

	Sample result	Financial Status Assessment					p
		Very bad – I can't afford the basics	Bad – I can't have everything I need	Average	Good – I can often afford everything I need, but it happens that I don't have enough money	Very good – I can afford more than I actually need	
Emotional component	3.38	2.58	3.03	3.22	3.56	3.88	**
Social component	3.36	2.63	3.05	3.30	3.46	3.78	**
Psychological component	3.74	3.33	3.50	3.68	3.82	4.06	**
Mental well-being	3.50	2.85	3.19	3.40	3.61	3.91	**
Segment size		1.4%	12.4%	36.8%	41.4%	8.0%	

Table 9. Financial status and mental well-being

3.6 Health Status and mental well-being

Mental well-being is an integral part of overall health, so it is not surprising that respondents who rated their health as good or very good have a higher level of mental well-being (Table 10). Among civil servants in Montenegro, slightly more than half (54.9%) fall into this category.

	Sample result	Health Status Assessment					P
		Very bad – I have severe health problems	Bad– I have serious health problems	Average – I have minor health problems	Good – I don't have any health problems	Very good – my health status is excellent	
Emotional component	3.38	1.00	2.77	3.17	3.51	3.84	**
Social component	3.36	1.00	3.04	3.23	3.45	3.65	**
Psychological component	3.74	1.80	3.61	3.65	3.78	4.00	**
Mental well-being	3.50	1.27	3.14	3.35	3.58	3.83	**
Segment size		0.1%	4.2%	40.8%	42.4%	12.5%	

Table 10. Health status and mental well-being

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research on the mental well-being of civil servants in Montenegro was conducted with the following objectives based on the obtained results:

- Gain insight into the actual state of well-being among civil servants.
- Explore different dimensions of well-being (emotional, social, and psychological).
- Investigate whether there are significant differences based on the demographic characteristics of respondents (gender, age, location of employment, economic and health status, job position).

The research findings could be used to support administrations in developing various corrective measures for enhancing mental well-being through various personal and professional development activities based on the data obtained.

On a sample of 838 respondents, the research revealed that:

- Respondents generally have positive feelings regarding their work, and the average rating of the **emotional well-being** of civil servants is 3.38, which indicates that this component is slightly above average. Individual items on this subscale have ratings ranging from 2.90 to 3.80. The lowest average rating is for the statement "I have recently felt 'wrung-out,'" with which 43% of respondents agree. It is encouraging that the vast majority of respondents agree or strongly agree that they often laugh at work (67.4%), and 72.8% disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that they feel fear at work. Respondents primarily describe states of emotional satisfaction and positive mood when describing the feelings they bring to work. When asked the open question, "How would you describe the mood you bring to work?" 465 respondents (55.69%) expressed positive feelings. Approximately 20% of respondents have negative feelings when coming to work, while 18.92% could be described as having neutral feelings. Others did not respond to this question. However, as can be seen from the overall sample, emotional satisfaction and positive mood are predominant among civil servants when they come to work and perform their duties.
- Based on the self-assessment of respondents' social well-being, the average rating of **social well-being** is 3.36, indicating that this component is slightly above the average value. Individual items in this subscale have ratings ranging from 2.73 to 3.99. 79.3% of civil servants feel they contribute to the institution they work for and the broader community. 66.9% agree they feel a sense of belonging to the collective. Civil servants are most bothered by the fact that there is more criticism than praise in their environment. The majority of responses to the question "In your opinion, what are the most common reasons for conflicts in the workplace?" cited reasons categorised under "social interaction," which pertains to the interpersonal relationships between two or more individuals in the workplace (43.20% of responses). Here, dominant answers include a lack of respect, unequal treatment of employees, poor communication among co-workers, inadequate work organisation, or tight deadlines imposed by supervisors, leading to increased pressure on employees. Other respondents perceive the problem to be related to the personal characteristics of their colleagues (26.25%), professional (in)competence (5.85%), or the influence of politics (2.27%) or financial (2.27%).

- The average rating of the **psychological well-being** of civil servants is 3.74, which is slightly higher than other aspects of mental well-being. Based on the obtained results, the average ratings of items on the subscale of psychological well-being range from 2.98 to 4.37, which is slightly higher than other aspects of mental well-being. This indicates that respondents have average to good or slightly above-average psychological well-being. The majority, 93.3% of the respondents, have a strong sense of their worth as individuals and professionals. Additionally, 88.8% claim to easily adapt to technological innovations at work, and 84.6% agree that they have clear life goals and know what they are striving for. The lowest scores were obtained for the statement regarding exposure to pressures. While 38.7% of the respondents disagreed with this statement, 37.9% agreed or strongly agreed with it. Regarding the responses to the third open question, "Describe your relationship with superiors (do you have problems with superiors or do the superiors have problems with you)," the majority of respondents reported having a respectful relationship. This type of response was provided by 630 respondents, making up 75.18% of all responses. Only 11.81% of civil servants reported problems with authority, most commonly with their immediate supervisor, while 3.94% identified issues within themselves.

- Based on the obtained average scores on the subscales of individual components, the overall average assessment of mental well-being is 3.50, which suggests a slightly above-average level. This result is encouraging, especially considering the large number of completed questionnaires.

- By comparing the results based on gender, age, location of employment, job position, marital status, financial status, and health status, it was found that there are no differences in mental well-being based on gender, age, and location of employment. However, whether someone is in a managerial position or not significantly affects the social and psychological components of well-being, with individuals in managerial positions experiencing higher levels of well-being. The survey did not reveal significant differences in the overall mental well-being among civil servants employed in various organisations and institutions. However, employees in ministries exhibit a higher level of emotional well-being compared to civil servants in local municipalities, government agencies, regulatory and independent authorities. As expected, significant differences exist among respondents based on their financial and health status, with higher well-being levels among civil servants who rated their status as good or very good. The research also revealed no differences among respondents based on their marital statuses, whether they are in a marriage or de facto relationship, single, divorced, or widowed. However, significant differences were found based on how they rated the quality of their relationship. Respondents who were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of their relationship had higher levels of well-being.

Below are the strengths and areas for development based on the survey.

Areas of strengths

- A large proportion of civil servants think for themselves that they have value, not only as people but also as professionals in their work (93.3%). They also think that their personal values make it easier for them to solve difficulties in life and at work (84.6%).
- A large proportion of civil servants feel that they contribute to the institution where they work and the community (79.3%). They also feel they fully belong to the team personnel (62.5%).
- A large proportion of civil servants indicate that they often laugh at work (67.4%). They also can freely express their views, suggestions, etc., at work (65.2%).

Areas for development

- Although the overall results are encouraging, there is a possibility that civil servants may not recognise signs of stress. In chronic stress, biochemical and psychological habituation is possible, where stress becomes perceived as a normal, regular state or part of one's temperament and personality. Therefore, the first recommendation is to organise training sessions to enhance participants' knowledge about the mechanisms for recognising "hidden stress" and its impact on physical health. Additionally, it is worth considering the implementation of programs that teach employees stress management techniques, such as meditation and mindfulness techniques, or encourage regular physical activity, which can help reduce stress and anxiety levels.
- The research has also shown that at the top of the list of reasons for conflicts and tensions in the workplace are problems in relationships with colleagues. The quality of interpersonal relationships, built through effective communication, is undoubtedly the foundation of mental well-being. A necessary condition for constructive and quality communication is the skill of listening, also known as "active listening". Hence, the second recommendation is to organise training sessions to raise awareness among participants and develop an appreciation for the value and multiple benefits of active listening as an essential component of quality communication.
- A large proportion of civil servants notice that in their environment, there is much more criticism than praise (46.6%). A recommendation for improvement would be the organisation of training on providing feedback that includes recognition and information on areas for improvement rather than just criticism. Additionally, the training should cover constructive ways of giving and receiving criticism.
- Slightly more than a third of respondents show dissatisfaction with their career progression (34.95%). It would be good to consider additional reward measures, set clearer criteria and reduce the role of factors outside the workplace that influence career progression (personal connections and political or ethnic affiliation).
- One-quarter of the total number of respondents state that the fatigue and exhaustion they bring home from work continue to affect their mood after working hours, while

17.1% mention that they cannot participate in other activities after work due to job busyness. In responses to the open-ended question, "What are the most common causes of tension and conflict at work?" workload, tight deadlines, and poor task distribution are frequently mentioned. It would be beneficial to organise special training for managers to recognise opportunities to address such issues and educate leaders and managers on the importance of mental well-being, including identifying factors that contribute to increased stress and anxiety levels among employees.

Annexe 1: Demographic Information of the Survey Sample and Population

According to the data obtained in October 2023, 14,069 employees are employed in the public administration of Montenegro. A total of 839 respondents participated in the mental well-being survey. One survey was invalid, so a sample size of N = 838 respondents was realised. The realised sample exceeds a sufficient number of respondents, and the sample is considered valid³.

The study involved 578 women, 244 men, and 16 respondents who chose not to disclose their gender (Table 11).

	Value	%
Female	578	69.0%
Male	244	29.1%
I prefer not to say	16	1.9%
<i>All (Σ)</i>	838	100.0%

Table 11. Structure of the sample – gender

The participants were divided into five age categories (Table 12). The highest number of them were between 31 and 40 years old (43.3%), somewhat fewer were between 41 and 50 (26.5%), and the smallest number of participants were in the group of those older than 61 (4.7%).

	Value	%
Up to 30 years	103	12.3%
31 - 40	363	43.3%
41 - 50	222	26.5%
51 - 60	111	13.2%
61 years and older	39	4.7%
<i>All (Σ)</i>	838	100.0%

Table 12. Structure of the sample – age

Out of a total of 838 civil servants who responded to the questionnaire, the majority work in Podgorica (82.9%), followed by Budva (2.6%), Herceg Novi (2.4%), and Tivat (2%), while employees in other cities are represented in the sample with less than 2% (Table 13). Two respondents did not answer this question.

³ For a confidence interval of 99.0% and a maximum error of ±5.0% (for an incidence value of 50%), the sufficient sample size is N = 643 subjects.

	Value	%
Podgorica	693	82.9%
Budva	22	2.6%
Herceg Novi	20	2.4%
Tivat	17	2.0%
Bijelo Polje	14	1.7%
Kolašin	12	1.4%
Nikšić	11	1.3%
Cetinje	9	1.1%
Rožaje	7	0.8%
Pljevlja	7	0.8%
Berane	7	0.8%
Kotor	6	0.7%
Bar	5	0.6%
Danilovgrad	2	0.2%
Žabljak	2	0.2%
Plužine	1	0.1%
Mojkovac	1	0.1%
<i>All (Σ)</i>	836	100.0%

Table 13. Structure of the sample - location of employment

Just over half (51.9%) of the participants are employed in ministries. 39.3% of the participants are employed in other bodies, government agencies, regulatory and independent authorities, while the remaining individuals work in local municipalities (Table 14).

	Value	%
Ministries	435	51.9%
Body within a ministry. Government Agencies. Regulatory and Independent authorities	329	39.3%
Local Municipalities	74	8.8%
<i>Svi (Σ)</i>	838	100.0%

Table 14. Structure of the sample – organisation/institution

When it comes to job positions, the sample included 190 managers, accounting for 22.7% of the total. Most commonly, these positions are expert-managerial staff, followed by senior managerial staff, civil servants, or heads of administrative bodies (Tables 15 and 16).

	Value	%
Yes	190	22.7%
No	648	77.3%
<i>All (Σ)</i>	838	100.0%

Table 15. Structure of the sample – management of an organisational unit

	Value	%
Senior managerial staff	32	16.8%
Public servants or Heads of administrative bodies	28	14.7%
Expert-managerial staff	131	68.6%
<i>All (Σ)</i>	191	100.0%

Table 16. Structure of the sample – management of an organisational unit

Regarding marital status, participants were divided into five categories: single, married, in a non-marital partnership, divorced, and widowed. The results indicate that among civil servants, the highest percentage is married individuals at 56.0%, while the lowest percentage is widows or widowers, accounting for only 1.9% (Table 17).

	Value	%
Single	248	29.6%
Married	469	56.0%
Non-marital partnership	59	7.0%
Divorced	46	5.5%
Widow/widower	16	1.9%
<i>All (Σ)</i>	838	100.0%

Table 17. Structure of the sample – marital status

For the assessing of mental well-being, it is important not only to know if someone is in a relationship but also the quality of that relationship. Therefore, the question was posed to those who are in a marital or non-marital partnership to assess the quality of their relationship (Table 18). The data shows that as many as 89.6% of them are satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of their relationship.⁴

⁴ The average assessment of partner relationship quality is M=4.31 (Min = I am very dissatisfied [1] – Max = I am very satisfied [5]). A higher average score represents greater satisfaction.

	Value	%
I am very dissatisfied	6	1.1%
I am not satisfied	16	3.0%
I can't tell	33	6.3%
I am satisfied	225	42.7%
I am very satisfied	247	46.9%
<i>All (Σ)</i>	527	100.0%

Table 18. Quality of the partner relationship assessment

The majority of respondents rate their financial situation as good (41.4%), meaning they can generally afford everything they need but occasionally find themselves short of money.⁵ Slightly fewer (36.8%) rate their financial situation as average, while 8% of the respondents believe they can afford more than they need. Others assess their financial situation as poor (12.4%) or very poor (1.4%), meaning they cannot even afford the basics (Table 19).

	Value	%
Very bad – I can't afford the basics	12	1.4%
Bad – I can't have everything I need	104	12.4%
Average	308	36.8%
Good – I can often afford everything I need. but it happens that I don't have enough money	347	41.4%
Very good – I can afford more than I actually need	67	8.0%
<i>All (Σ)</i>	838	100.0%

Table 19. Financial status assessment

The majority of participants in the study assessed their health as good⁶, indicating they had no health problems (42.4%). Slightly fewer participants believe their health is average, indicating they have minor health issues (40.8%). Excellent health is reported by 12.5% of the participants. More serious health issues are present in 4.2% of the participants, and 0.1% believe they have severe health problems (Table 20).

	Value	%
Very bad – I have severe health problems	1	0.1%
Bad– I have serious health problems	35	4.2%
Average – I have minor health problems	342	40.8%
Good – I don't have any health problems	355	42.4%
Very good – my health status is excellent	105	12.5%

Table 20. Health status assessment

⁵ The average assessment of the financial situation is M=3.42 (Min= Very bad [1] – Max = Very Good [5]). A higher average score indicates higher satisfaction.

⁶ The average assessment of health status is M=3.63 (Min= Very Bad [1] – Max = Very Good [5]). A higher average score indicates higher satisfaction