



**HER WORLD'S**

# Health & Wellness

**REPORT 2022**

DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU STAND  
HEALTH-WISE AMONG YOUR PEERS?  
THESE ARE THE KEY FINDINGS ON  
OUR READERS' PHYSICAL AND  
MENTAL HEALTH FROM OUR ANNUAL  
WHAT WOMEN WANT SURVEY.



ained weight over the past year? You're not alone. The latest survey by market research firm Ipsos found that 39 per cent of Singaporeans have seen a higher number on the scale since the Covid-19 pandemic, an increase of 9 per cent from 2020.

And you're not the exception if you haven't been as healthy or fit as before: The 2020 National Population Health Survey, jointly conducted by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and Health Promotion Board (HPB), noted that there has been a rise in chronic diseases and unhealthy lifestyles as the pandemic continues. Apart from a 50 per cent spike in the number of people with high blood pressure in just two years, there has also been an increase in the diabetes prevalence rate despite a five-year war on the condition. In addition, fewer people have managed to achieve the recommended amount of physical activity.

It is perhaps unsurprising that there has also been an overall decline in mental health among people in Singapore. A 2021 survey by *The Straits Times* found that 76 per cent of the respondents have been feeling sad or depressed since the pandemic started, and another article by the newspaper reported a higher demand for therapy amid these uncertain times.

To find out how our readers are doing, we surveyed over 6,000 women for our What Women Want health and wellness report, in collaboration with consumer research and analytics firm Milieu Insight. We've picked out the key findings, and included resources that we hope will help recalibrate your physical and mental health goals this year.

# Physical Health

According to HPB, you should aim for 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every week for a healthier you. Moderate physical activities include brisk walking, dancing and gardening, while vigorous physical activities include jogging or running, fast cycling and fast swimming.

## OUR READERS SAID...

**66%**  
Consider themselves somewhat physically healthy

**78%**  
Already started taking supplements before the Covid-19 pandemic

## HOW WE PRACTISED SELF-CARE

**64%**  
Make sure to get quality sleep

**62%**  
Exercise regularly

## A HEALTHIER LIFESTYLE? YES, PLEASE

**69%**  
Wish to be able to exercise more and get good sleep

**67%**  
Want be able to stick to a healthy diet

## TIP

Consider collecting a free fitness tracker from HPB and participating in the National Steps Challenge. The device not only tracks your steps, but also your heart rate, sleep and blood oxygen level. The best part? You can earn Healthpoints based on the number of steps you take each day, and then redeem your Healthpoints for shopping vouchers. Visit [healthhub.sg](http://healthhub.sg) for more information.

## COMMON CHALLENGES IN MEETING THEM

**57%**  
Do not have the motivation

**51%**  
Just do not have the time

**What's your physical health goal this year?  
Write down two achievable steps you can take to meet it.**

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## THERE HAS ALSO BEEN A RISE IN SLEEP ISSUES SINCE THE PANDEMIC STARTED

# 50%

Still feel tired despite sleeping sufficient hours

# 48%

Frequently wake up in the middle of the night

# 45%

Have irregular sleep schedules despite a hybrid work model

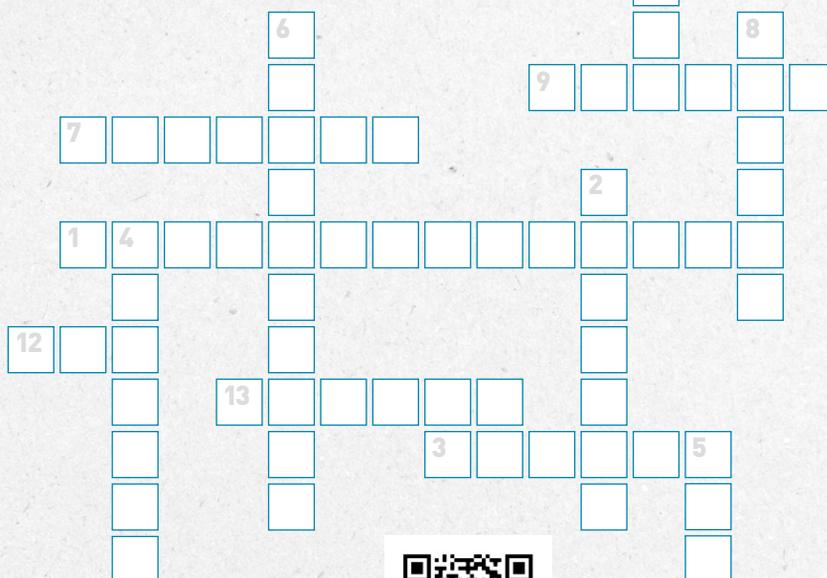


## WHY YOU NEED ENOUGH SLEEP

Dr Leow Leong Chai, director of Sleep Disorders Unit and senior consultant, Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, at Singapore General Hospital, says people who sleep for less than six hours per night on average have reduced life expectancy compared to those who sleep seven to nine hours per night.

He adds that insufficient sleep duration or poor quality sleep has been shown to affect daytime functioning in terms of cognition, decision making and memory, as well as being implicated in causing mood disturbances, weight gain, and many other chronic health conditions.

NEED SOME MOTIVATION TO START MOVING AGAIN? COMPLETE OUR CROSSWORD PUZZLE TO REMIND YOURSELF OF THE BENEFITS OF EXERCISE.



Want to know the answers?  
Scan the QR code

### ACROSS

- Protects you against \_\_\_\_\_ disease.
- Reduces \_\_\_\_\_, which has a big impact on your mood.
- Improves \_\_\_\_\_ and posture, which is important for preventing injuries.
- Combats the side effects of \_\_\_\_\_, a group of diseases involving abnormal cell growth.
- Alleviates \_\_\_\_\_ back pain, which those with sedentary lifestyles typically suffer from.
- Enhances your \_\_\_\_\_ life, which means higher physical intimacy between you and your partner.
- Boosts your \_\_\_\_\_, which is what gets you through the day.

### DOWNWARDS

- Strengthens \_\_\_\_\_ and bones.
- Reduces \_\_\_\_\_ and depression, putting you in a better mood.
- Improves \_\_\_\_\_ quality, ensuring you get better rest.
- Boosts your \_\_\_\_\_ level, which heightens your self-esteem.
- Increases \_\_\_\_\_ and brain function so you retain information better.
- Aids \_\_\_\_\_, which leads to better bowel movement.

# Mental Health

Our mental health affects how we think, feel, act, make choices and relate to others. We can start caring for it by identifying our emotional stressors – things that are constantly making us feel scared, anxious or helpless. If you don't have someone you trust to confide in, you could consider consulting a therapist.

## OUR READERS SAID ...



65%

Consider themselves somewhat mentally healthy



43%

Feel like they are pretty balanced when managing it

## THE TOP FIVE FACTORS AFFECTING THEIR MENTAL HEALTH ARE

- 1 PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES
- 2 FINANCES
- 3 WORK
- 4 FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
- 5 PHYSICAL HEALTH



## BUT IT DOESN'T HELP THAT THERE ARE SEVERAL CHALLENGES IN THE WAY



51%

Are inclined to try to resolve their problems before asking others for help



32%

Don't know what they can do to resolve their problems



30%

Aren't sure how serious their mental health issues are

What is the main factor affecting your mental health at present? List two possible things you need help or support with.

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Write down three traits you don't like about yourself, but use positive ways to describe them. For example, someone "obsessive" can also be "passionate". Then, pen three things you like about yourself.

## IS ONLINE THERAPY ACTUALLY EFFECTIVE?

There has been a recent boom in online therapy services, no thanks to living in a time of great uncertainty.

"In 2020, we saw an uptick in patients asking our GPs about what they could do about stress and anxiety, and data showed that mental wellness via teleconsult was the most requested service by our users," says Justin Chow, chief marketing and partnerships officer at homegrown telemedicine provider Whitecoat ([whitecoat.com.sg](http://whitecoat.com.sg)).

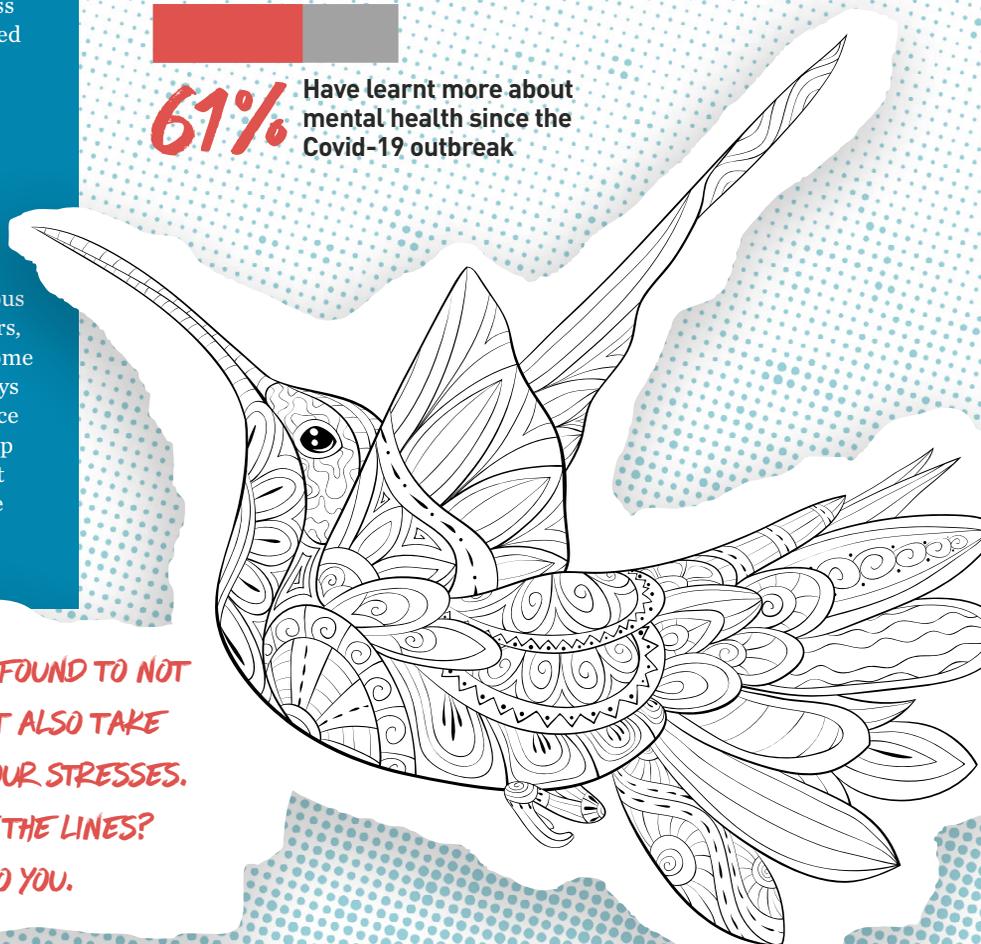
Worried that online therapy might not be as effective? The opposite is true.

"For some people, being anonymous lends them confidence. And for others, being in a familiar space like their home can help them relax and open up," says Lauren Wan, head of client experience at Singapore-based mental health app Lavica ([lavica.io](http://lavica.io)). She points out that therapy is also much more accessible when it's as convenient as logging on from the comfort of your home.

## TO LEARN MORE ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH...



ADULT COLOURING HAS BEEN FOUND TO NOT ONLY RELAX THE BRAIN, BUT ALSO TAKE THE ATTENTION AWAY FROM OUR STRESSES. WANT TO COLOUR OUTSIDE THE LINES? GO AHEAD — YOU DO YOU.



# Female Technology

Femtech usually involves tracking periods and pregnancy, but is fast expanding to accommodate hormonal health, menopause and sexual pleasure. Some notable Singapore-based femtech start-ups include Zazazu, which offers a membership service for women that curates products and services centred on sexual well-being, and Ferne Health, an online platform that provides home-based tests and consultations for sexual health, particularly for women.

## OUR READERS SAID...



**52%**  
Don't use  
any apps



**39%**  
Use period-  
related apps



**6%**  
Use  
fertility-  
or sexual  
wellness-  
related  
apps



## WHY PERIOD-RELATED APPS MAKE TRACKING YOUR PERIODS EFFORTLESS

Here are three popular ones to check out that boast additional features.



### Flo

*(flo.health - available on the App Store and Google Play)*

You can choose from over 70 symptoms, such as bloating, cramping and mood, to input into your log to track the changes you experience during each cycle. It also comes with tons of quizzes, articles and insights that you can browse to learn more about your body.



### Eve by Glow

*(glowing.com - available on the App Store and Google Play)*

It not only tracks your cycle, but also displays your health data in charts. And you can trust that it'll be pretty accurate: The app is compatible with the Health app on the iPhone, which you can use to track your sleep, steps, walking and running, among other things.



### Clue

*(helloclue.com - available on the App Store and Google Play)*

You can not only predict your cycle for up to three months in advance, but also access sexual and reproductive health content available on the app, which includes a podcast called *Hormonal* that explores how our hormones impact bodies and the world around us.

# Top Five Concerns in 2022

Will our economy emerge from the shadow of the coronavirus pandemic this year? Will travel resume to what it was before? No one really knows, and it is only natural for us to be afraid of the unknown.

## HOW'S THE ECONOMY DOING?

It's understandable that money matters are the biggest concern on most people's minds. In November last year, the Ministry of Trade and Industry said that although there was a 7 per cent gain in gross domestic product growth in 2021, it will slow to between 3 and 5 per cent this year amid an uneven recovery at home and lingering uncertainty over global growth. This is on top of the plan to increase the goods and services tax from 7 to 9 per cent between now and 2025. However, there are measures taken to alleviate the eventual inflation.

"Similar to historic precedence, the government will likely introduce offsetting measures, such as U-save vouchers and S&CC rebates to help cushion the adverse impact, in particular on low-income households," says Yun Liu, an economist at HSBC Global Research.



## WE ARE MOST WORRIED ABOUT OUR...

- 1 Personal financial stability
- 2 Household financial stability
- 3 The physical health of loved ones
- 4 Overseas travel restrictions
- 5 Mental health

**It might have been a tough year, but there are always things to be grateful for. What are three things you can count as blessings?**

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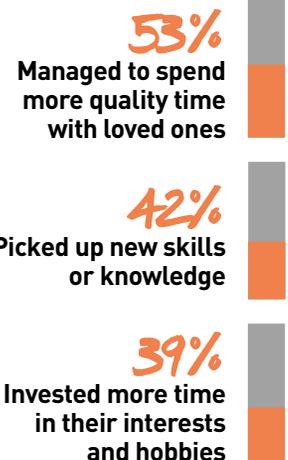


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## THREE POSITIVE ACTIONS TAKEN OVER THE PAST YEAR



**How do you picture yourself one year from now? Draw a self-portrait. What do you think your sketch says about how you imagine your future to be?**

HER WORLD'S  
WHAT WOMEN WANT  
2022 SURVEY

Over 6,000 women responded to our survey on health and wellness. This series highlights key areas that readers are most interested in.

NOT  
JUST  
FOR

# Women

LOOKING FOR WAYS TO GET ACTIVE? IN THIS SECOND OF OUR FIVE-PART SERIES BASED ON HER WORLD'S WHAT WOMEN WANT 2022 SURVEY, WE SHINE THE SPOTLIGHT ON THREE WOMEN WHO ARE AT THE TOP OF THEIR GAME IN TRADITIONALLY MALE-DOMINATED SPORTS.

Xu Liting is well-known in the local bouldering scene, and has competed both locally and internationally.

# Xu Litong

**THE 33-YEAR-OLD COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT HAS BEEN ROCK CLIMBING FOR 13 YEARS. SHE CLIMBS COMPETITIVELY AND HAS WON ALL OF THE MAIN BOULDERING COMPETITIONS IN SINGAPORE AT LEAST ONCE. (@ @LITHIUM88)**



I was introduced to climbing when I got a job as a programmes manager at a climbing gym while studying for my degree. I got hooked on it pretty quickly because it is different from other sports – it involves an element of problem solving. Every time I go to the gym, I'm faced with various 'problems' of varying complexities, so every session is exciting.

I'm not a professional climber, as I don't get paid to do it, and so I need a full-time job to earn a living. However, I've competed both locally and internationally, and have won all of the main bouldering competitions in Singapore at least once. One of my favourite competitions was the 2019 Moonboard Masters, in which anyone across the globe could take part remotely using a standardised set-up. I won the international competition and got sponsored by the company that organised it.

Climbing may be a traditionally male-dominated sport, but that has changed a lot over the past couple of years, at least in Singapore. While I haven't faced any major discrimination as a female climber, there are times where male climbers make thoughtless remarks, such as 'she's only good because she's so light'. Yes, strength-to-weight ratio counts, but they forget that since women are smaller and shorter, it also means we have to work harder to get through each move.

In my opinion, climbing is one of the most gender-equal sports out there. If we go by the grading system, men and women are not that far apart when it comes to how hard they can climb. From what I've observed, a lot of the time, it is the women who hold themselves back – they tend to be easily intimidated and are more self-conscious

about their performance, so they shy away from attempting problems. Even though I compete, I'm not a competitive person, thus one of the things I love about climbing is that it's you against the problem you're trying to solve. It is important to keep that in mind, and not give in to the pressure of being scrutinised when you're on the wall.

One of the things I've had to sacrifice for climbing is my social life – my life is pretty much work, climb, sleep, repeat. I don't feel bad about it though, because I feel fortunate to have something I'm so passionate about. The most rewarding thing about it is seeing the progression I've made, and knowing that I achieved something that I couldn't before. I don't do other sports outside of climbing because I don't think I actually have the energy to do so – I spend so much time climbing. However, there are other complementary activities to climbing, including yoga and pilates, which greatly help with flexibility, mobility and core strength. Callisthenics is also a complement to the sport, as it builds strength.

My advice to women looking to get into climbing? Just take the first step! Look for a gym that is friendlier towards beginners, and don't be afraid to approach people there for guidance. Climbers are generally a very friendly bunch, and we are all very happy to give pointers. Women might be intimidated because it looks like a sport that requires a lot of strength, but it's really a full-body exercise. You'd be amazed at just how much you can accomplish without being able to do a single pull-up.”



Farhanna Farid engaged a powerlifting coach when she dead-lifted more than the national record during a casual session at the gym.



## Farhanna Farid

**SHE HAS BEEN POWERLIFTING FOR FIVE YEARS, AND WORKS AS A PHARMACIST AND POWERLIFTING COACH. THE 30-YEAR-OLD HAS BROKEN MULTIPLE ASIAN RECORDS, AND IS THE FIRST SINGAPOREAN TO CLINCH AN OVERALL GOLD MEDAL IN THE OPEN AGE CATEGORY AT THE 2018 CLASSIC POWERLIFTING CHAMPIONSHIPS IN MONGOLIA. (@ @FARHANNAFARIDDD)**

I got into powerlifting when I started following my boyfriend to the gym. Back then, I had no sense of my strength or lifting capabilities, so when I dead-lifted more than the national record, I had no idea what my potential could mean. However, it marked the turning point, as my boyfriend then suggested that we engage a powerlifting coach to see how far I could take it.

While powerlifting takes centre stage in my life right now, I wouldn't call myself a professional powerlifter, as I'm not a full-time athlete and I'm not getting paid for it. We do not have a grading system – that is how accessible powerlifting is – and there are no entry requirements to competitions either. Powerlifting has taught me a lot about my own body: its uniqueness, strengths and limitations. It has also given me the discipline to push or hold back when necessary.

I competed in two local competitions within my first year, and for my third competition I represented Singapore at the 2018 Asian Classic Powerlifting Championships in Mongolia. I will never forget the goosebumps and the pride I felt hearing our national anthem after I clinched Singapore's first gold medal in the Open Age Category.

In terms of gender representation, I'd say that when powerlifting in Singapore was in its infancy

a decade ago, we only had a handful of athletes, and there were definitely more males than females. However, in recent times, our team sent 14 athletes to compete at the Singapore Powerlifting Opens, nine of whom were female.

I've never been subjected to discrimination because of my gender and, for the most part, men are usually in awe of what I do and are highly supportive of my passion. If anything, I actually get some form of resistance from women: They question why I do this, and why I 'want to look muscular'. That said, I believe it comes from a place of concern or curiosity.

There are definitely more women gracing the gym floor nowadays, and I think this change is here to stay. We are starting to accept that beauty comes in all shapes and forms, and women are realising how empowering lifting can be, both physically and mentally. The recent overtones of female empowerment have also propelled women to push themselves beyond their boundaries.

My advice to women looking to get into powerlifting? Talk to folks in the sport and ask for advice – slide into my DMs! As with most sports, learn the basics, and master the form and technique first. Also, don't allow yourself to be intimidated by numbers: with the right programming, the strength will come. Lastly, turning up at the gym is a win in itself, so just show up."

Kirstie Gannaway has been boxing for nearly half her life, despite her family's initial resistance to her pursuing the sport.



# Kirstie Gannaway

**SHE PICKED UP BOXING 16 YEARS AGO AND IS A MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTOR. ALSO A PROFESSIONAL BOXER, THE 31-YEAR-OLD HAS WON TWO PROFESSIONAL BOXING FIGHTS. (@KIRSTIEGANNAWAY)**

"growing up, I looked up to my older brother, and when he started competing in boxing after my dad signed him up for lessons, I was inspired to do it too. He brought me to the gym and taught me the basics, and I haven't stopped training since.

My family had tried to discourage me from pursuing boxing – and then from fighting professionally – for a mix of reasons, including the risk of injury, and the lack of opportunities in Singapore that would make it hard to make ends meet. It was a big risk on my part to pursue it, but it is my passion and I made the decision to proceed. I became a professional boxer in 2018, and currently train at The Ring Boxing Community. Boxing is a male-dominated sport, but I believe socially constructed gender norms contribute to that.

While there were times when I had to prove myself as a female fighter, those moments only helped me to sharpen my mindset in the sport.

That said, I have been heckled at because of my gender. My worst experience was at a gym in Australia – I had to put up with guys making sexual noises at me while spooning gym equipment and making inappropriate jokes. I left and never went back. I'm particular about only training in places where I'm shown respect, and during those times when I struggled to find the right place, I would just train at home.

There are now more women in boxing than before, and the eagerness of women to break gender stereotypes is also greater than ever! Boxing has become so much more popular as a way to get fit, and it helps that there are now plenty of female role models in combat sports.

My journey in martial arts has allowed me to learn so much about myself and how to become a better person: from learning and applying discipline, respect and self-confidence, to practising focus, mindfulness and calmness under pressure. Also, as women, our bodies are constantly changing due to hormonal fluctuations, so it has taught me to trust my intuition when it comes to training.

My advice to women looking to pick up boxing? Check out the different gyms until you find what feels like the right environment for you. I pay a lot of attention to the people at a gym because they are the ones who create the vibe of the place. It's important to train at a place where you feel safe and comfortable. If you feel intimidated, you can also start by getting a friend or colleague to attend a class with you."