

The Mental Health Index™ report

Regional Comparison –

Australia, Canada, United Kingdom
and United States, December 2020



LifeWorks
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Executive Summary

For nine consecutive months, the mental health of Americans, Australians, Britons, and Canadians has been significantly lower than prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Regional mental health scores since April have shown general improvement through July; however, all regions showed declines from July to August. While there was an improvement in September in all regions, except for the United States, October results showed decreases in Canada and the United Kingdom. In November, modest improvements were observed in Australia and in Canada while mental health declined in both the United States and the United Kingdom. In December, the mental health score continues to decline in the United States while improvements are observed in Australia and the United Kingdom. Canada's mental health score has dropped modestly from the previous month.

The level of mental health in December remains concerning as it indicates that the working population in all four geographies is significantly distressed when compared to mental health scores prior to 2020.

Comparing November 2020 to December 2020, there is a significant increase in mental stress in all regions. The increase in mental stress in December is greatest in Canada (60.2), followed by the United Kingdom (59.0), the United States (58.6), and then Australia (52.9).

For nine months, since significant measures were taken in managing the pandemic, citizens of Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States have had to adapt to changing conditions in all aspects of their lives, including at work. **The most commonly reported stressful aspects of adapting at work during the pandemic are health and safety protocols, job uncertainty, interacting with the public, and work strain.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has led many individuals to reconsider their personal and professional priorities. In November, across all regions, approximately one-quarter of respondents indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic led them to consider a job or career change. In the current month, respondents were asked whether they have considered leaving their jobs since the beginning of 2020, for any reason. **Consistent with November results, approximately thirty per cent of respondents have considered leaving their job since 2020.** Individuals who indicated that they are thinking about leaving their jobs were also asked to provide a reason for considering leaving

A positive score on the Mental Health Index™ indicates better mental health in the overall working population, compared to the benchmark period of 2017 to 2019. A higher positive score reflects greater improvement. A negative Mental Health Index™ score indicates a decline in mental health compared to the benchmark period. The more negative the score, the greater the decline. A score of zero indicates mental health that is the same as it was in the benchmark period.



their positions. **The most commonly reported reason for considering leaving in all regions is increased mental stress/strain at work, a response that significantly outweighed other options.**

As the pandemic persists into its ninth month, individuals are seeing the impact of the pandemic beyond their personal experience to its effect on others, including their co-workers.

In all regions, over one-third of respondents report being concerned about a co-worker's mental health.

In addition to coping with the personal impact of the pandemic, people leaders are faced with the additional strain of managing a prolonged turbulent period in their workplace. When people leaders were asked whether they have had concerns about the mental health of employees since the onset of the pandemic, **between thirty and thirty-nine per cent of supervisors agree that they have concerns about the mental health of their employees;** the highest percentage of supervisors concerned is in the United States.

While more than half of employees in all regions are as productive in 2020 as they were in 2019 according to people leaders, in Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, more people leaders report that their employees were less productive than more productive in 2020 when compared to 2019.

With restrictions on non-essential travel across the globe, taking vacation time involves staying close to home. With travel on hold in 2020, respondents were asked whether they will use their employer-paid vacation allotment. **In all regions, less than half of respondents have taken/plan to take their vacation time in 2020.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended organizations across the country; a boon for some while others struggle, and those doing okay but where a swing in either direction could land them in either a fortuitous or grave scenario. The perception of how an organization has treated its employees and its customers during the pandemic could have both an immediate and lasting impact on its success. **At least 50 per cent of respondents in all regions agree that the way they think about and interact with brands/companies has been influenced by how they treated their employees during the pandemic.**

Between fifty-seven and sixty-three per cent of respondents agree that the way they think about and interact with brands/companies has been influenced by how they supported or treated their customers during the pandemic.



With the high-profile death of Black American, George Floyd, in June 2020, unprecedented awareness of anti-Black racism emerged. **At least one-third of respondents in all geographies agree that the way they think about and interact with brands/companies has been influenced by how they respond to social justice issues.**

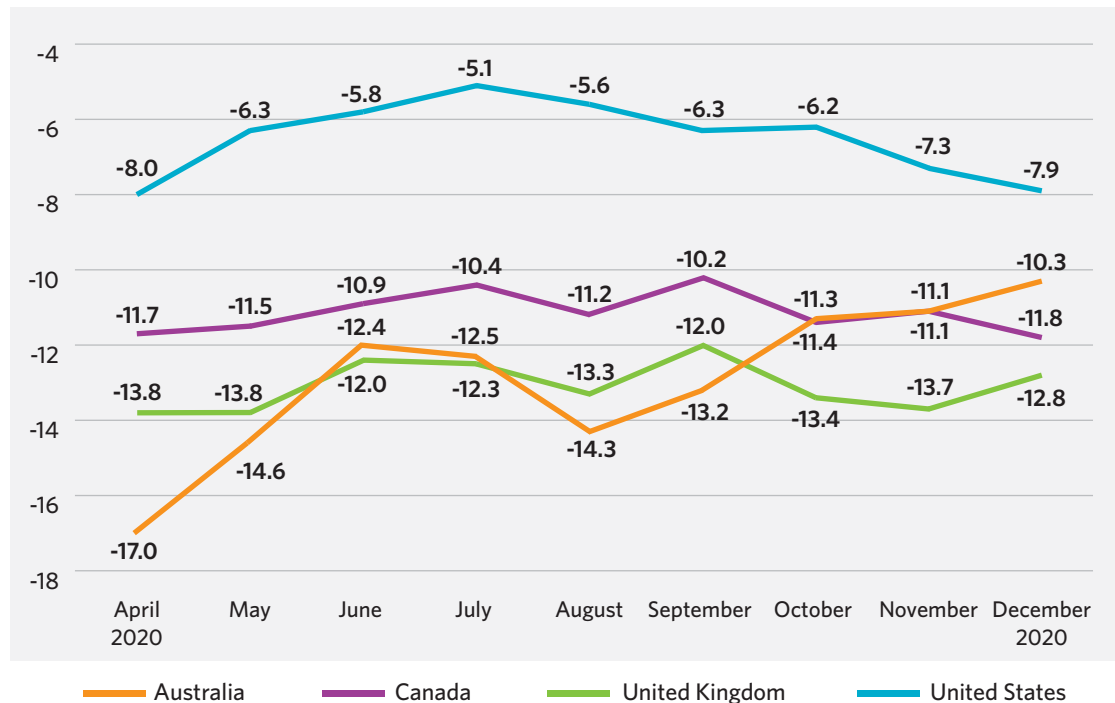
While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause restrictions and lockdowns across each country, recent vaccine developments provide some optimism. **In all regions, respondents most commonly reported their willingness to get vaccinated as soon as possible, followed by individuals who would get vaccinated, but not right away.** Willingness to receive the COVID-19 vaccine steadily increases with age in all countries.

The disruption because of the COVID-19 pandemic has been widespread, affecting people physically, mentally, socially, financially, at home, and in the workplace. In all geographies, respondents believe that most of the disruption will end for them personally in the second half of 2021. **In general, the longer the disruption is believed to last, the more negative the mental health score.**



Regional comparisons – Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and United States

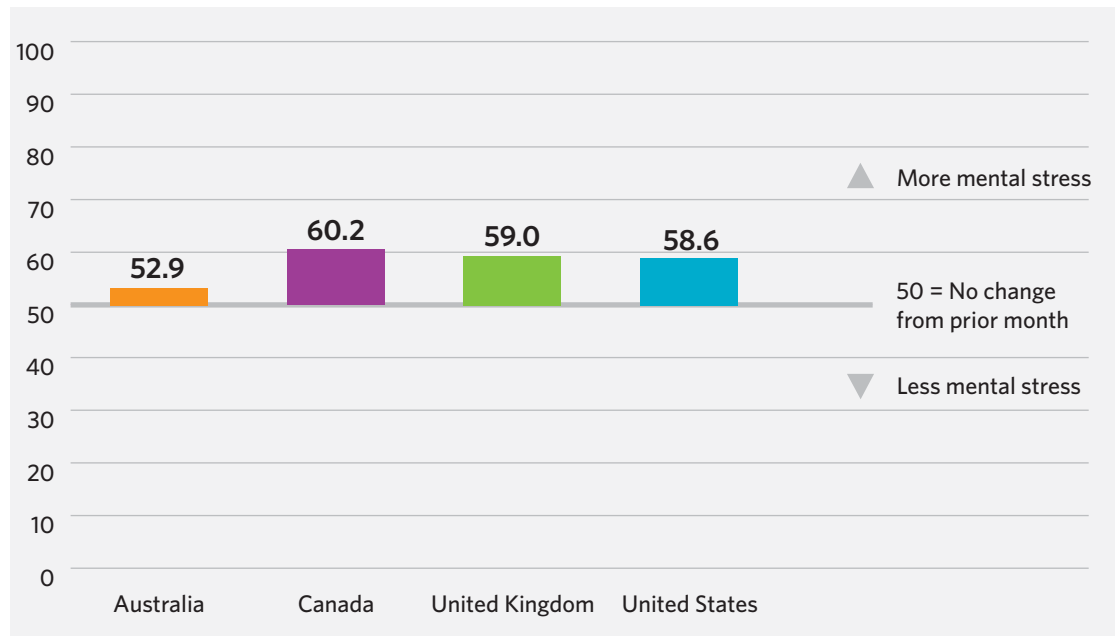
The Mental Health Index™ by region



Overall, the Mental Health Index™ is lowest in the United Kingdom (-12.8), followed by Canada (-11.8), Australia (-10.3), and then the United States (-7.9). Although variances between regions exist, the mental health in each region shows a significant decline when compared to the pre-2020 benchmark. In December, a decline in mental health scores is observed in Canada (-0.7 points) and in the United States (-0.6 points); whereas an improvement in mental health is observed in Australia (+0.9 points) and in the United Kingdom (+0.8 points).



The Mental Stress Change score (region)



Comparing November 2020 to December 2020, there is a significant increase in mental stress in all regions. The increase is greatest in Canada, followed by the United Kingdom, the United States, and then Australia.

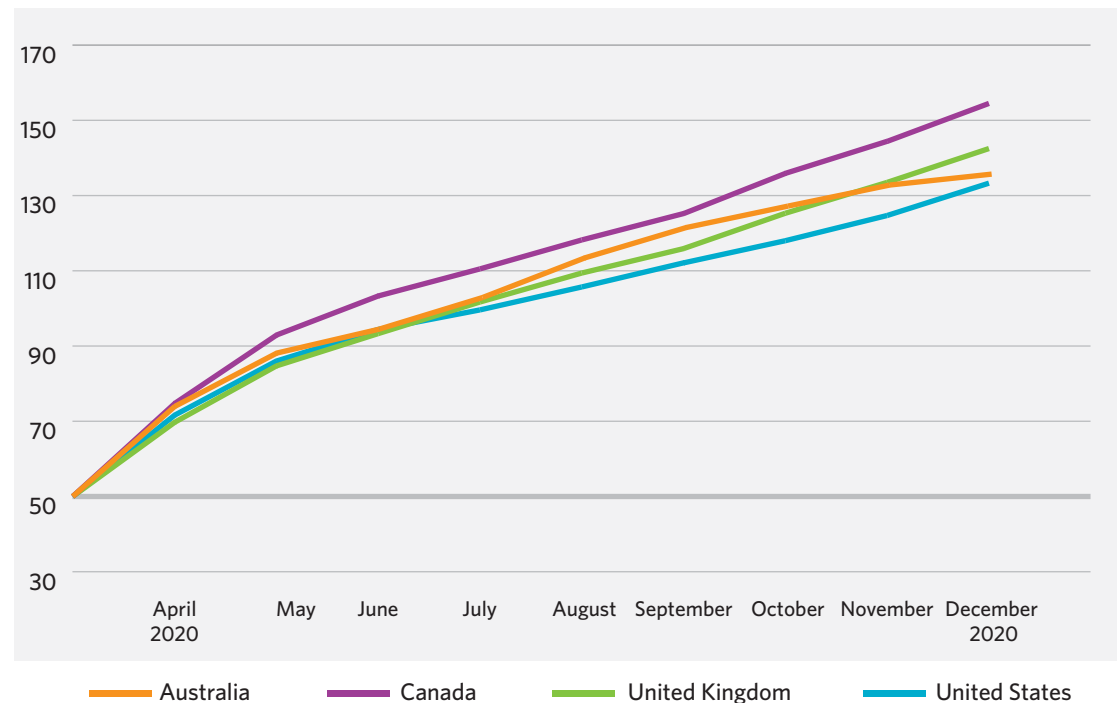


Mental Stress Change (cumulative)

The Mental Stress Change Score (MStressChg) is a measure of the level of reported mental stress compared to the prior month. The change is rooted against a value of 50 implying no net mental stress change from the previous month, while values above 50 indicate a net increase in mental stress and values below 50 indicate a net decrease in mental stress. The graph below tracks the increases and decreases to account for the cumulative effect on mental stress.

The greatest accumulation of mental stress is observed in Canada (154.5), followed by the United Kingdom (142.5), Australia (135.7), and the United States (133.3).

The continual increase in mental stress demonstrates that respondents in all regions are reporting more mental stress month-over-month. In order to relieve this level of accumulated stress, a significant portion of the population must start regularly reporting lower stress.





Spotlight

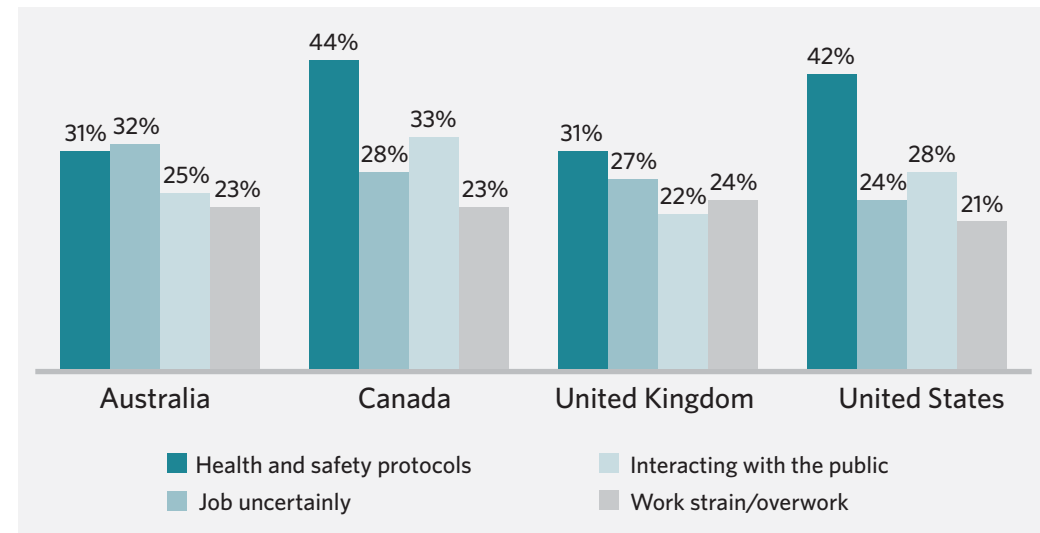
Living during a pandemic

Adaptation

For nine months, since significant measures were taken in managing the pandemic, citizens of Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States have had to adapt to changing conditions in all aspects of their lives, including at work.

- The most commonly reported stressful aspects of adapting at work during the pandemic are health and safety protocols, job uncertainty, interacting with the public, and work strain.
- In Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, health and safety protocols is the most commonly reported stressful aspect of adapting at work, whereas, in Australia, job uncertainty is the most common.

Top four most stressful aspects of adapting to work due to COVID-19



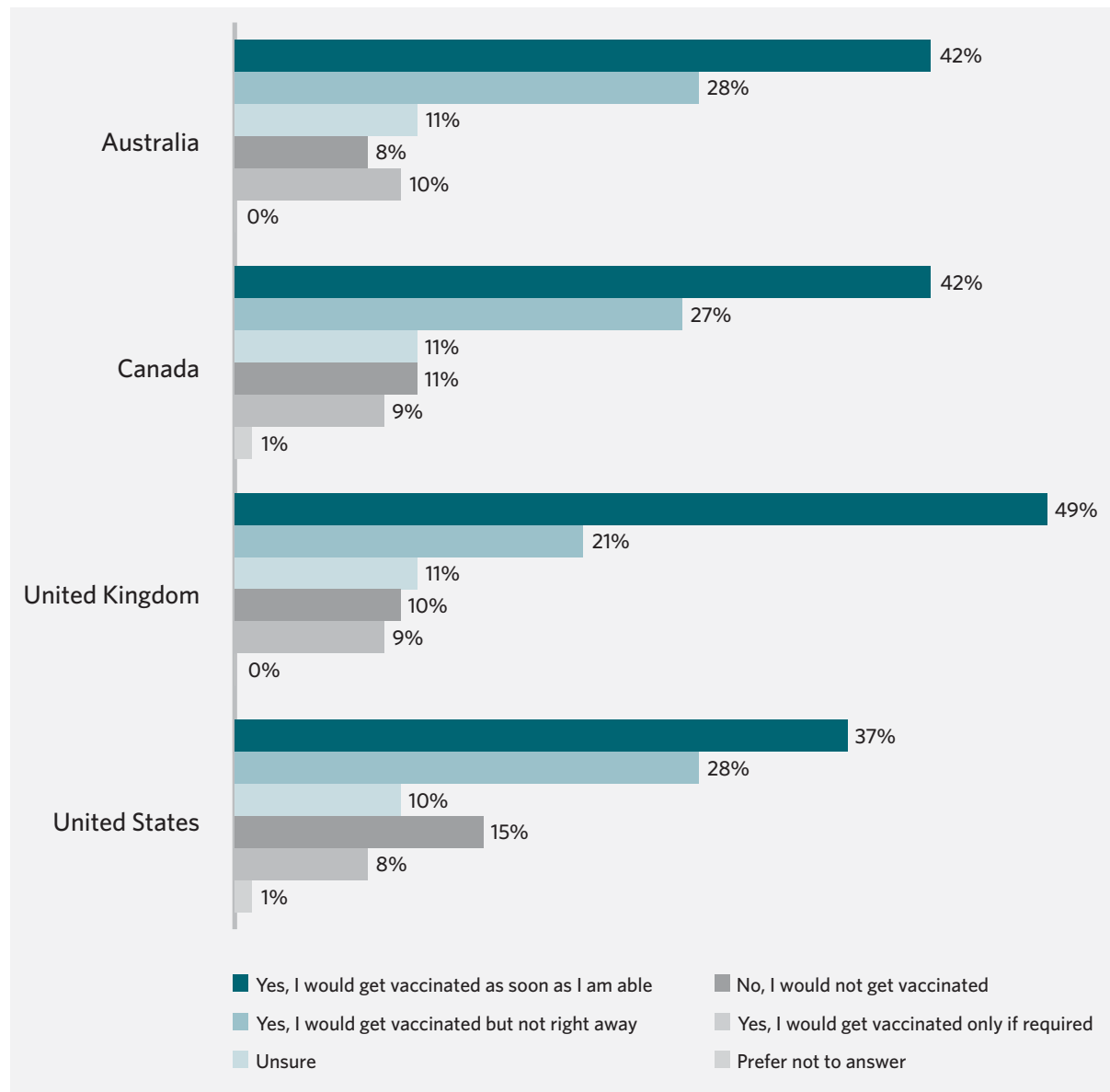


The COVID-19 vaccine

While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause restrictions and lockdowns across each country, recent vaccine developments provide some optimism. Individuals were asked about their willingness to take a COVID-19 vaccine.

In all regions, respondents most commonly reported their willingness to get vaccinated as soon as possible, followed by individuals who would get vaccinated, but not right away.

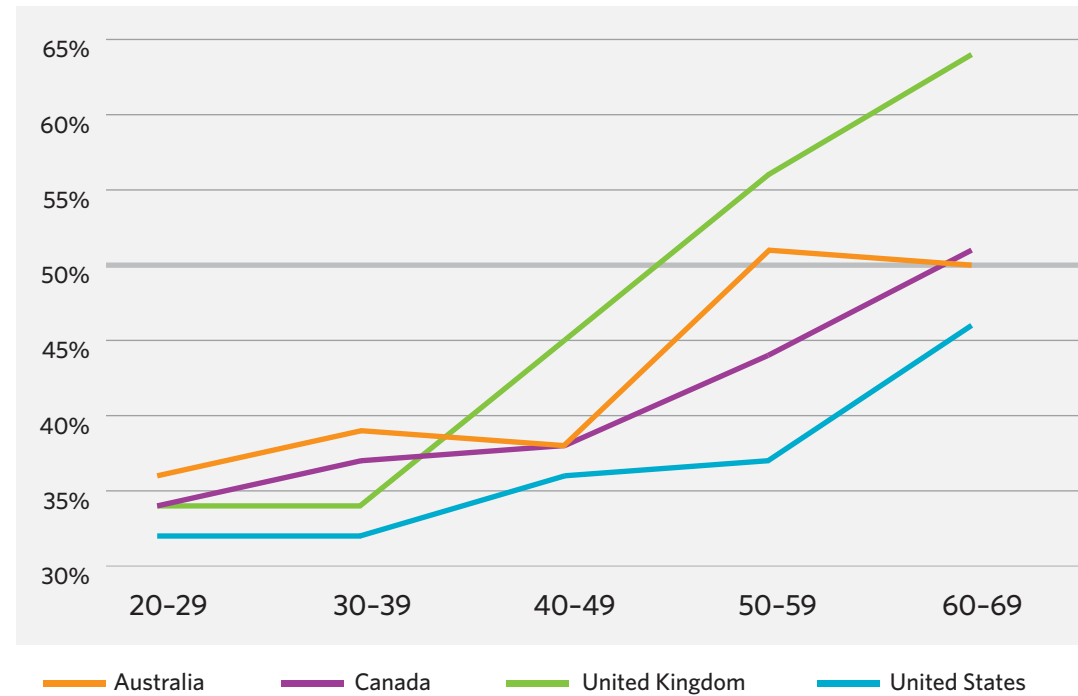
Willingness to get a COVID-19 vaccine, if available





Willingness to receive the COVID-19 vaccine steadily increases with age in all countries.

Percentage willing to get the vaccine immediately by age



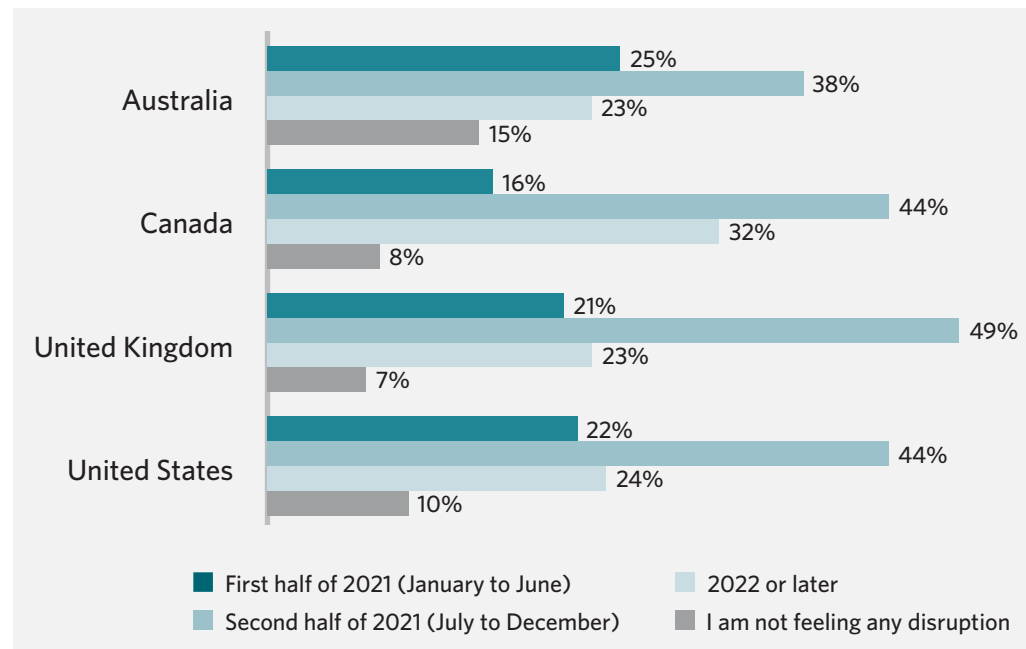


Pandemic disruption to individuals

The disruption because of the COVID-19 pandemic has been widespread, affecting people physically, mentally, socially, financially, at home, and in the workplace. Individuals were asked when they think that most of the disruption because of the pandemic will be over for them personally.

- Respondents believe that most of the disruption will end for them personally in the second half of 2021.
- In general, the longer the disruption is believed to last, the more negative the mental health score.

When individuals believe the personal disruption due to COVID-19 will end

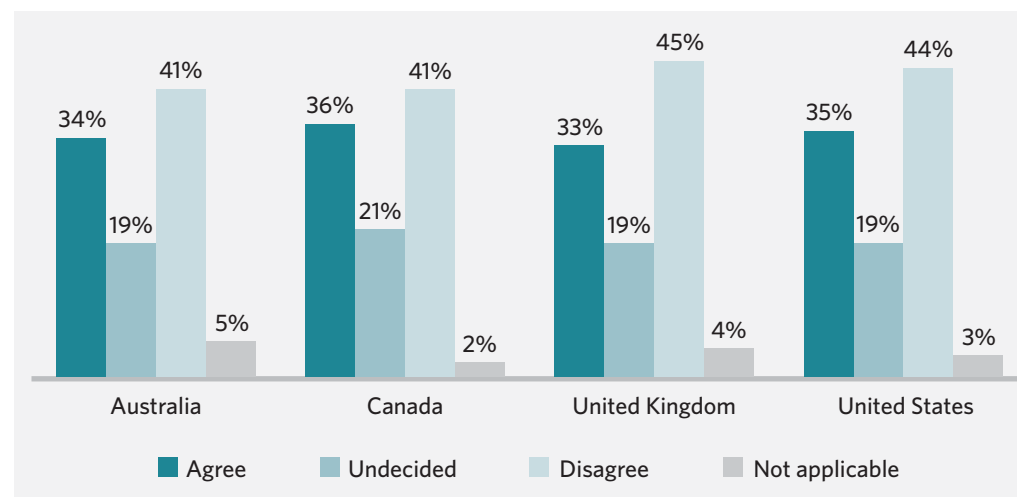


Concern about the mental health of co-workers

As the pandemic persists into its ninth month, individuals are seeing the impact of the pandemic beyond their personal experience to its effect on others, including their co-workers. Survey participants were asked whether they have been concerned about a co-worker's mental health.

In all regions, over one-third of respondents report being concerned about a co-worker's mental health.

Concern about a co-worker's mental health





Employees and the workplace

Employees thinking about leaving their jobs

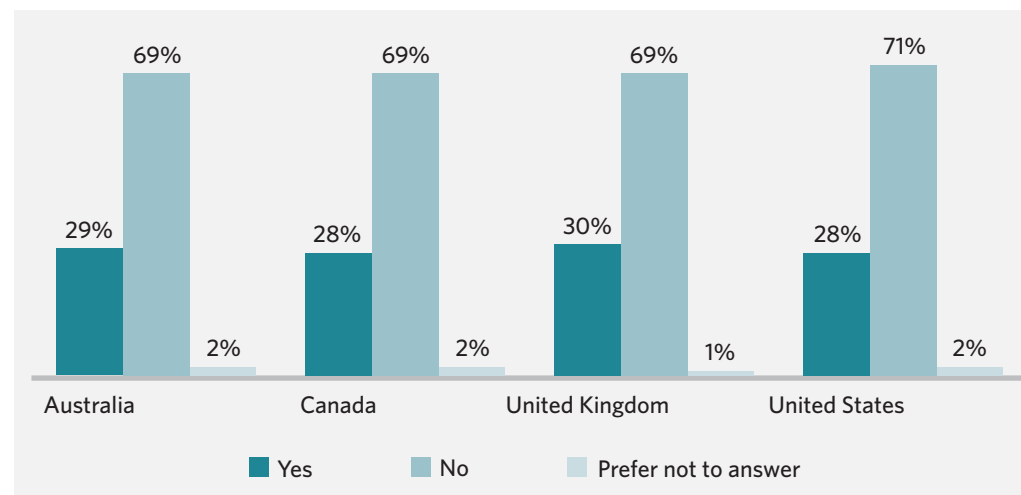
The COVID-19 pandemic has led many individuals to reconsider their personal and professional priorities. Previous findings (November 2020) indicate that twenty-nine per cent of Australians, twenty-four per cent of Canadians, twenty-six per cent of United Kingdom citizens, and twenty-four per cent of Americans have considered a job or career change because of the pandemic. In the current month, respondents were asked whether they have considered leaving their jobs since the beginning of 2020, for any reason.

In all countries, approximately thirty per cent of respondents have considered leaving their job since 2020.

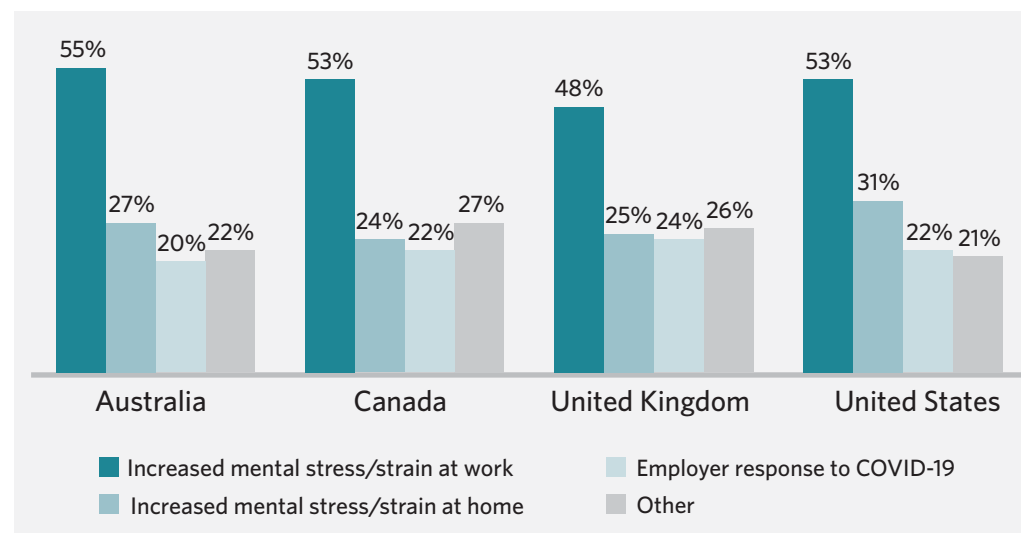
Individuals who indicated that they are thinking about leaving their jobs were also asked to provide a reason for considering leaving their positions.

The most commonly reported reason for considering leaving in all regions is increased mental stress/strain at work, a response that significantly outweighed other options.

Since the beginning of 2020, have individuals considered leaving their job



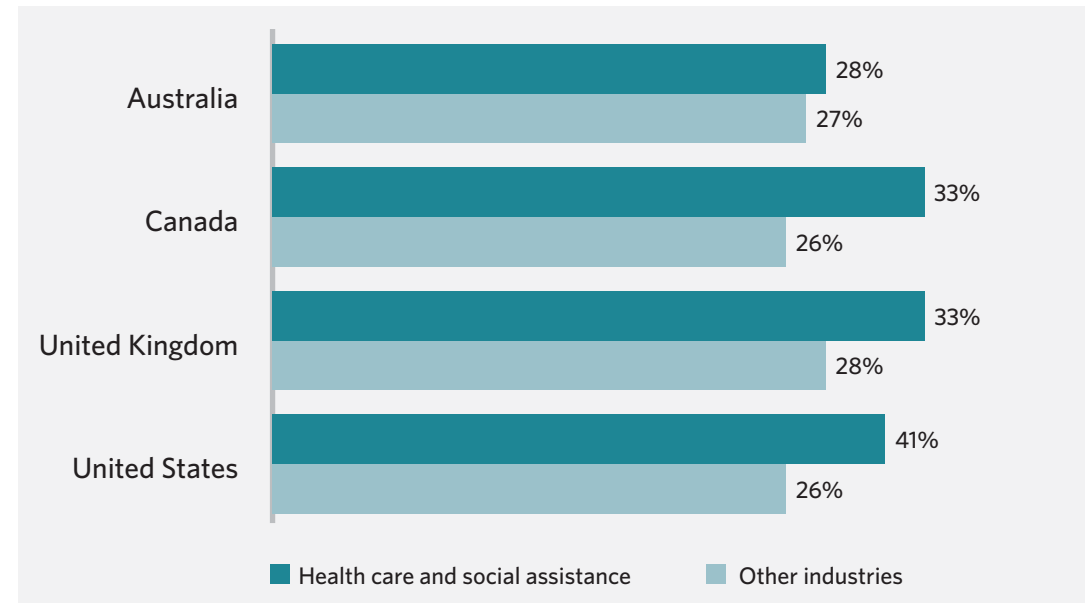
Reasons for the consideration of leaving their current job





Individuals in healthcare and social assistance are more likely to consider leaving their jobs when compared to all other industries in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In Australia, the percentage of individuals in healthcare and social assistance considering leaving their jobs was very close to that of all other industries.

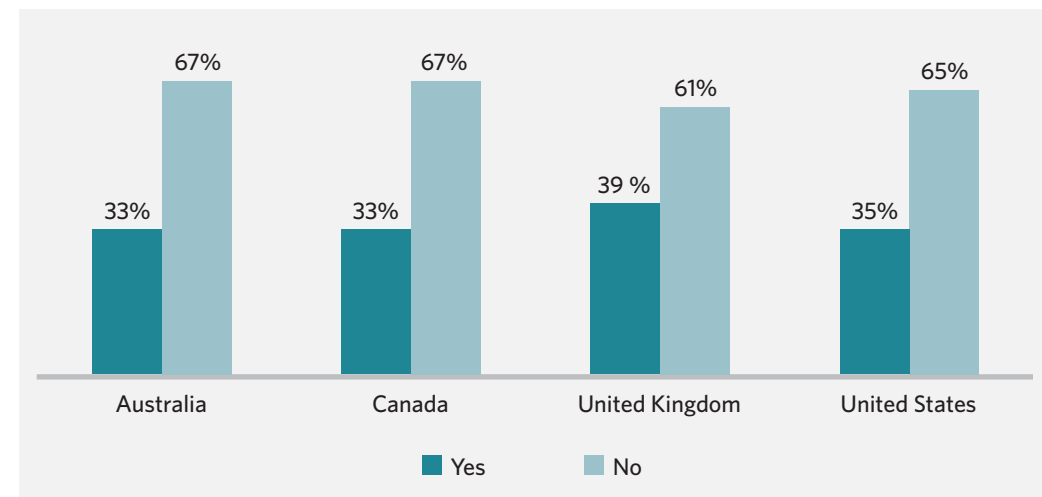
Percentage considering leaving their current job since the beginning of 2020



People leaders

In addition to coping with the personal impact of the pandemic, people leaders are faced with the additional strain of managing a prolonged turbulent period in their workplace. At least one-third of respondents across all regions report supervising one or more people at work.

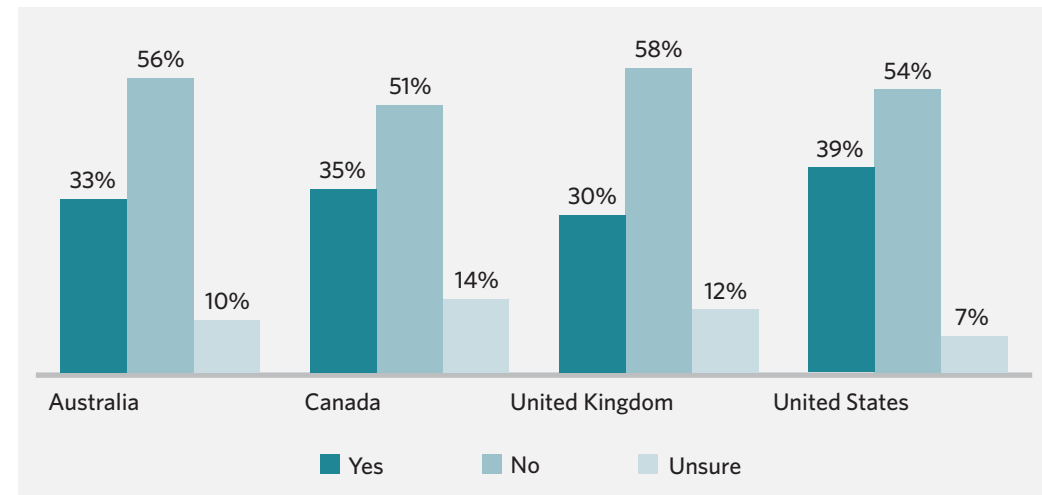
Respondents who supervise one or more people at work





When people leaders were asked whether they have had concerns about the mental health of employees since the onset of the pandemic, between thirty and thirty-nine per cent of supervisors agree; the highest percentage of supervisors concerned about the mental health of employees is in the United States.

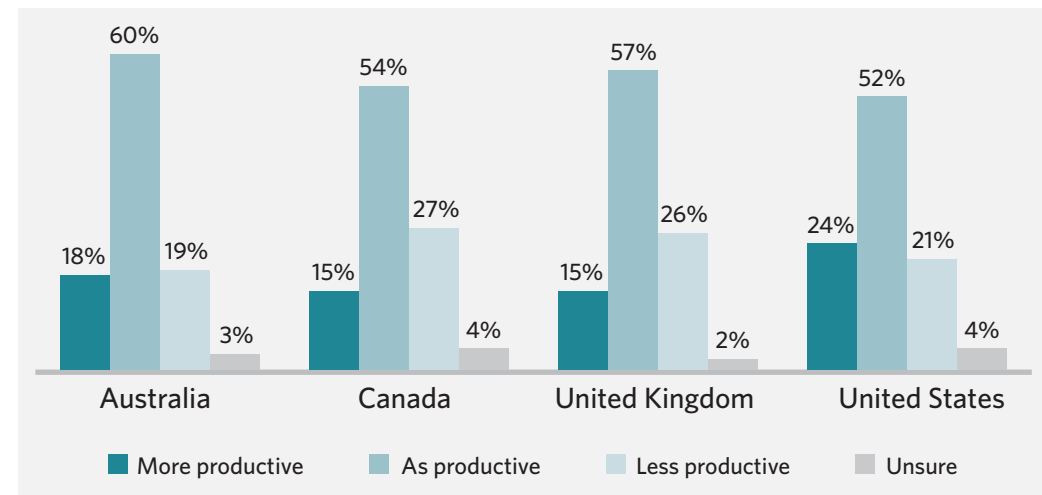
People leader concerns about the mental health of employees since the onset of the pandemic



People leaders were asked to rate the productivity of their employees in 2020 when compared to 2019.

While more than half of employees in all regions are as productive in 2020 as they were in 2019 according to people leaders, in Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, people leaders report that their employees were less productive than more productive in 2020 when compared to 2019.

People leader estimates of productivity in 2020 compared to 2019



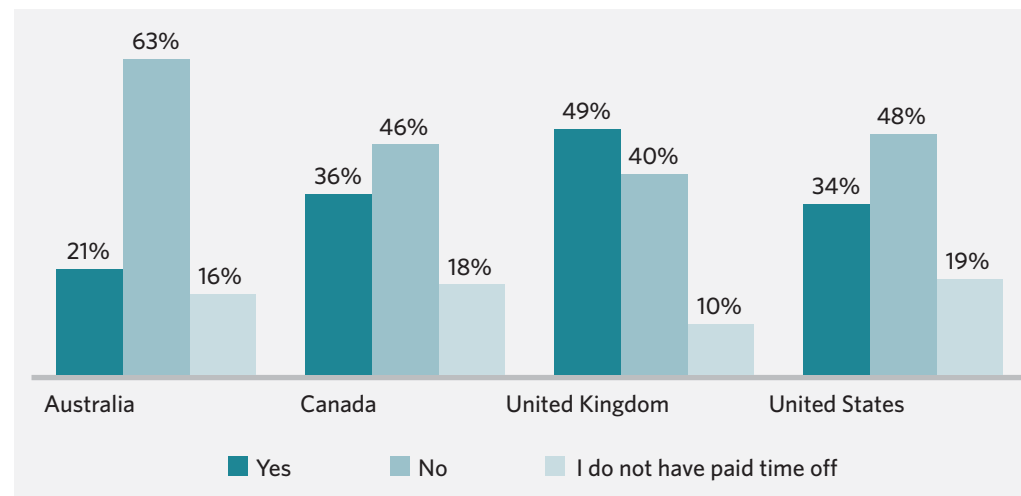


Using employer-paid vacation time

With restrictions on non-essential travel across the globe, taking vacation time involves staying close to home. With travel on hold in 2020, respondents were asked whether they will use their employer-paid vacation allotment.

- In all regions, less than half of respondents have taken/plan to take their vacation time in 2020.
- Australia has the lowest percentage of individuals taking/planning to take their vacation (21 per cent), with sixty-three per cent of respondents not planning to take the vacation time allotted to them.

Individuals using all their vacation time in 2020



Expectations for the future

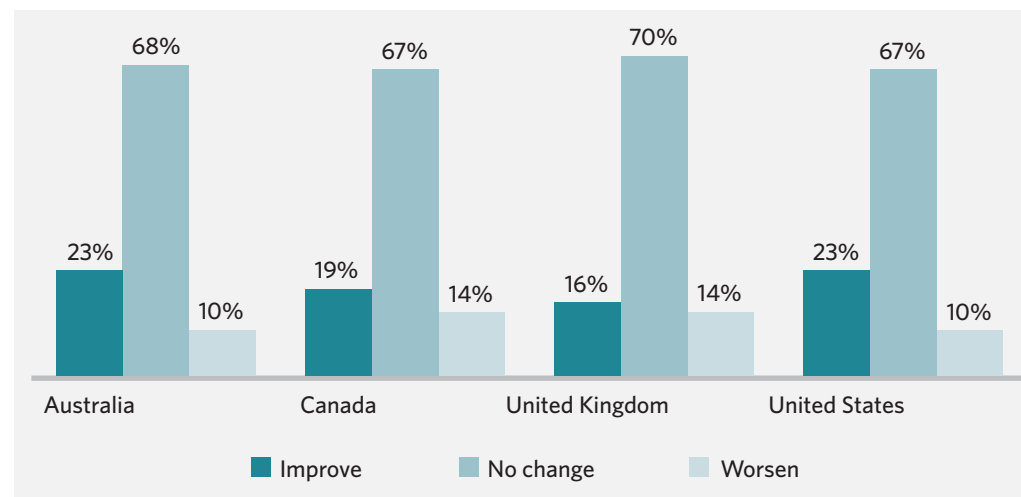
As individuals continue to face the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the New Year brings hope for a successful vaccine program and thoughts of when a return to the pre-pandemic state will be within reach.

Changes in the work situation

Individuals were asked whether they expect changes in their work situation.

- Between sixteen and twenty-three per cent of respondents expect an improvement in their work situation.
- At least ten per cent of respondents in all regions expect their work situation to worsen.

Expected future changes in work situation





Changes in social relationships

Individuals were asked whether they expect a change in their social relationships.

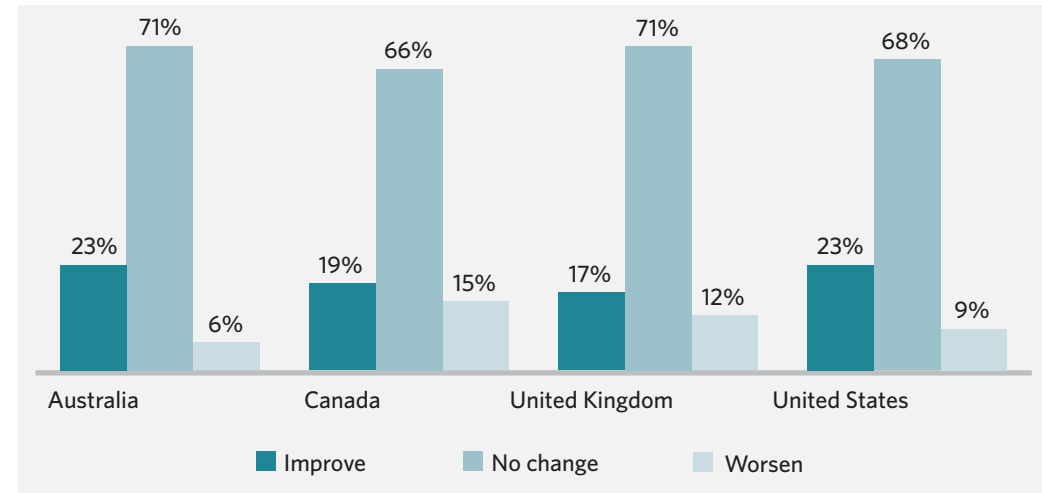
Between seventeen and twenty-three per cent of respondents expect an improvement in their social relationships.

Changes in the financial situation

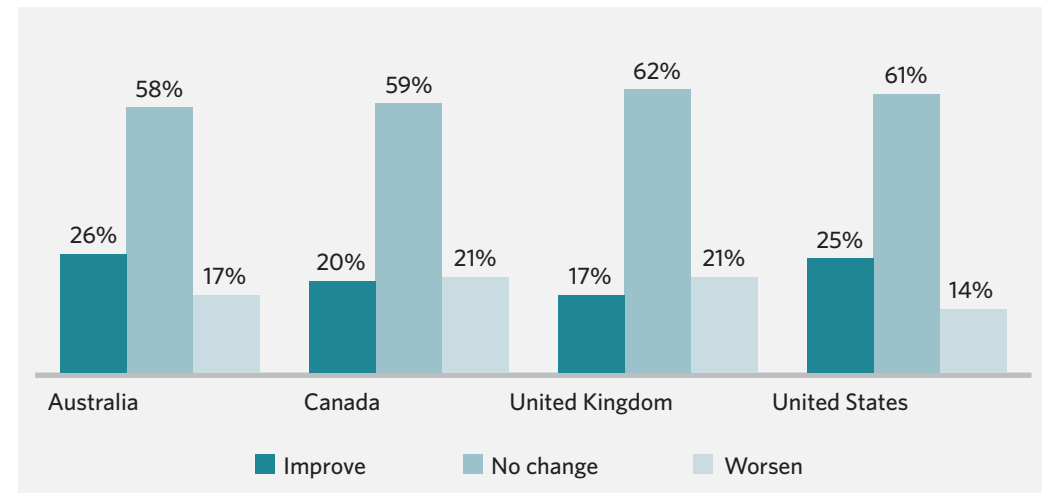
Individuals were asked what change they expect with respect to their financial situation.

- Between seventeen and twenty-six per cent of respondents expect an improvement in their financial situation.
- Respondents from Australia and the United States are more likely to expect that their financial situation will improve versus worsen; however, individuals in Canada and in the United Kingdom have a greater proportion of respondents expecting that their financial situation will worsen when compared to those expecting an improvement.

Expected future changes in social relationships



Expected future changes in financial situation





Brand loyalty

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended organizations across the country; a boon for some while others struggle, and many in precarious limbo. The perception of how an organization has treated its employees and its customers during the pandemic could have both an immediate and lasting impact on its success.

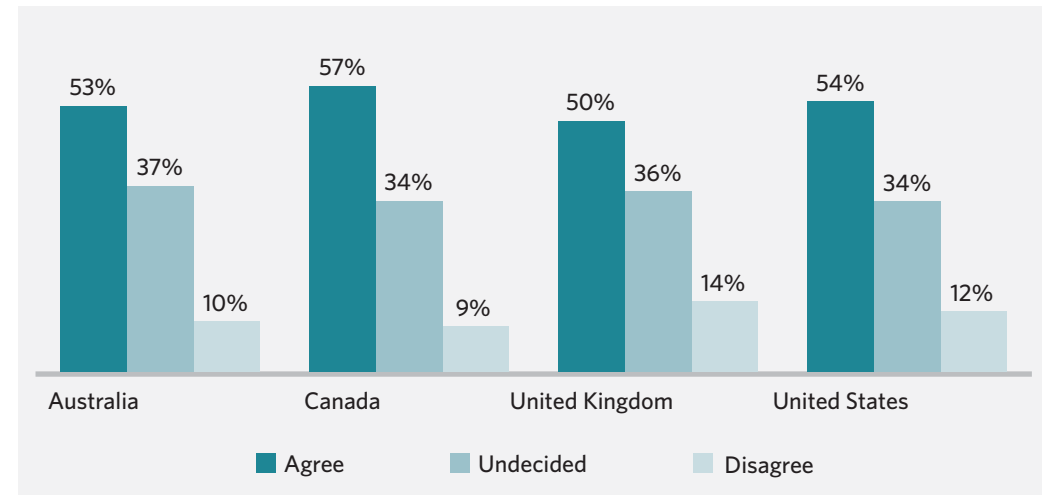
How companies have treated their employees

At least 50 per cent of respondents in all regions agree that the way they think about and interact with brands/companies has been influenced by how they treated their employees during the pandemic.

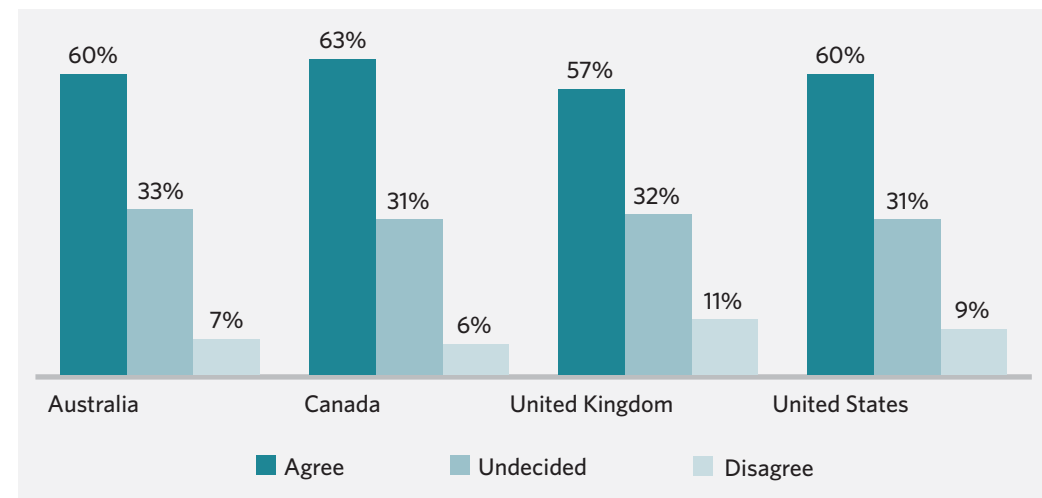
How companies have supported or treated their customers

Between fifty-seven and sixty-three per cent of respondents agree that the way they think about and interact with brands/companies has been influenced by how they supported or treated their customers during the pandemic.

The way individuals think about and interact with brands/companies has been influenced by how they have treated their people/employees



The way individuals think about and interact with brands/companies has been influenced by how they supported/treated their customers



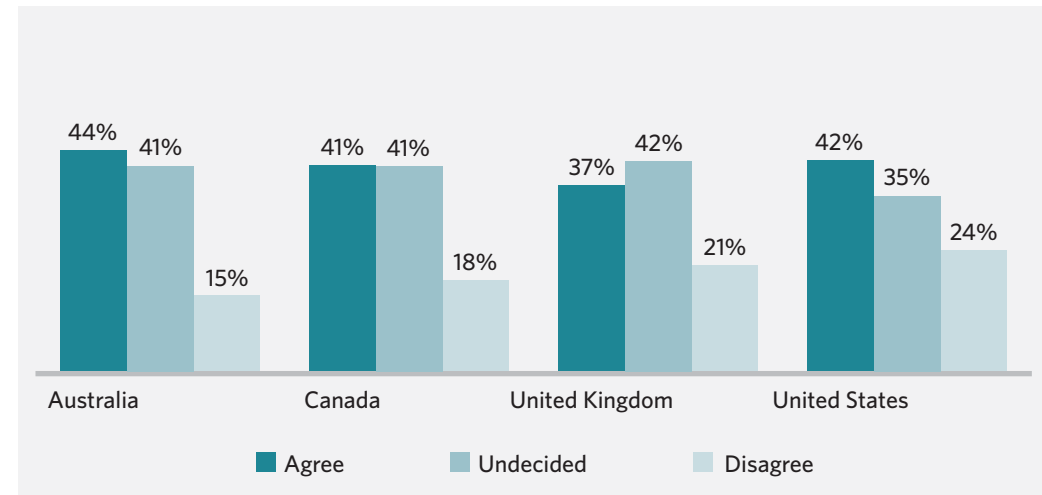


How companies have responded to social justice issues

With the high-profile death of Black American, George Floyd, in June 2020, unprecedented awareness of anti-Black racism emerged. Individuals were asked whether the way they think about and interact with brands has been influenced by their response to social justice issues.

At least one-third of respondents across all countries agree that the way they think about and interact with brands/companies has been influenced by how they respond to social justice issues. A similar proportion remains undecided.

The way individuals think about and interact with brands/companies has been influenced by their response to social justice issues





Overview of the Mental Health Index™

The mental health and wellbeing of a population is essential to overall health and work productivity. The Mental Health Index™ provides a measure of the current mental health status of employed adults in a given geography, compared to the benchmarks collected in the years of 2017, 2018 and 2019. The increases and decreases in the Index are intended to predict cost and productivity risks, and inform the need for investment in mental health supports by business and government.

The Mental Health Index™ report has three main parts:

1. The overall Mental Health Index™ (MHI), which is a measure of change compared to the benchmark of mental health and risk.
2. A Mental Stress Change (MStressChg) score, which measures the level of reported mental stress, compared to the prior month.
3. A spotlight section that reflects the specific impact of current issues in the community.

Methodology

The data for this report was collected through online surveys of representative groups of 5,000 residents of the United States, 3,000 residents of Canada, 2,000 residents of the United Kingdom, and 1,000 residents of Australia. All those surveyed are currently employed or were employed within the prior six months. The same respondents participate each month to remove sampling bias. The respondents were asked to consider the prior two weeks when answering each question. The Mental Health Index™ is published monthly, starting April 2020. The benchmark data was collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The data for November 2020 was collected from November 20 to November 30, 2020 for all regions.

Calculations

To create the Mental Health Index™, the first step leverages a response scoring system turning individual responses to each question into a point value. Higher point values are associated with better mental health and less mental health risk. Each individual's scores are added and then divided by the total number of possible points to get a score out of 100. The raw score is the mathematical mean of the individual scores.



To demonstrate change, the current month's scores are then compared to the benchmark and the prior month. The benchmark is comprised of data from 2017, 2018 and 2019. This was a period of relative social stability and steady economic growth. **The change relative to the benchmark is the Mental Health Index™. A score of zero in the Mental Health Index™ reflects no change, positive scores reflect improvement, and negative scores reflect decline.**

A Mental Stress Change score is also reported given that increasing and prolonged mental stress is a potential contributor to changes in mental health. It is reported separately and is not part of the calculation of the Mental Health Index™. The Mental Stress Change score is (percentage reporting less mental stress + percentage reporting the same level of mental stress * 0.5) * -1 + 100. The data compares the current to the prior month. **A Mental Stress Change score of 50 reflects no change in mental stress from the prior month. Scores above 50 reflect an increase in mental stress, scores below 50 reflect a decrease in mental stress.** The range is from zero to 100. A succession of scores over 50, month over month, reflects high risk.

Additional data and analyses

Demographic breakdown of sub-scores, and specific cross-correlational and custom analyses are available upon request. Benchmarking against the national results or any sub-group, is available upon request. Contact MHI@morneaushepell.com

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