

The Mental Health Index™ report

Regional Comparison – Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and United States, May 2020

Spotlight on the mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic



LifeWorks
by Morneau Shepell

**MORNEAU
SHEPELL**

Table of contents

Executive Summary	1
The Mental Health Index™	2
Additional data and analyses	3
Overview of The Mental Health Index™	4
Methodology	4
Calculations	5
Regional comparisons – Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and United States	6
The Mental Health Index™ (region)	6
The Mental Stress Change score (region)	7
The Mental Stress Change (cumulative)	8
The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (region)	9



Executive Summary

May marks the third month since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Since the outbreak began, all four regions have been dramatically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the United Kingdom and the United States being particularly hard hit. The United States leads the world with the highest number of COVID-19 cases and deaths and the UK ranks in the top five for both COVID-19 cases and deaths worldwide.

Early in the month, all four regions were under some form of state of emergency or public health emergency, including the closure of most non-essential businesses and schools. Attention has shifted to the gradual reopening of the economies and society in every jurisdiction, with some regions relaxing restrictions more rapidly than others. While a majority of citizens in the U.S., UK, Canada and Australia are nervous about the easing of restrictions until the virus is contained,¹ every region is proceeding with a phased reopening focused initially on outdoor spaces, select retail businesses, and permitting small gatherings.

Travel and the movement of citizens across borders continues to severely restricted in all jurisdictions. The Canada-US border remains closed. In the UK, a mandatory quarantine period is also in place for anyone entering by air, with exemptions for people returning from France. In Australia, a worldwide travel ban has remained in place and prevents all non-Australian citizens and non-residents from entering the country.

In each region, the resultant and cumulative effect of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a negative impact on the mental health of Americans, Canadians, Britons and Australians.

The lowest Mental Health Index™ scores in the four regions are in Australia, followed by the United Kingdom

¹ Teneo, May 7, 2020 – Coronavirus update



The Mental Health Index™

The May 2020 Mental Health Index™ comes at a unique time. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted lives and livelihoods more broadly and more quickly than anything in recent memory. As well, it looms ominously for at least the next several months. While an impact on mental health would be expected, the size of the impact is noteworthy.

Data from Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States shows that the lowest Mental Health Index™ scores in the four regions are in:

- Australia (-14.6), followed by
- the United Kingdom (-13.8),
- Canada (-11.5), and then
- the United States (-6.3).

Comparing April 2020 to May 2020, there was a significant increase in mental stress in all regions. The increase in mental stress was the greatest in:

- Canada (68.3), followed by
- the United Kingdom (65),
- the United States (64.4), and then
- Australia (64.3).

The most prevalent COVID-19 pandemic concern is financial for Australia, Canada and the United States, and similar to last month, Australia had the highest proportion of individuals where this is a concern. The most prevalent issue for the United Kingdom continues to be the fear of a loved one dying from COVID-19.

The single greatest COVID-19 pandemic concern impacting mental health is financial for Australia, Canada and the United States. This is a change for the United States as the greatest concern in April 2020 was a loved one dying from COVID-19. The single greatest concern for the United Kingdom remained the same as the prior month: fear of a loved one dying from COVID-19.



Some personal disruption because of the COVID-19 pandemic is reported in all regions:

- 96.5 per cent of respondents in the United Kingdom,
- 95.6 per cent of respondents in the Australia,
- 95.5 per cent of respondents in the United States, and
- 95 per cent of respondents in the Canada.

In all four countries surveyed, the greatest proportion of individuals believe that the personal disruption caused by the pandemic will be over in 2021. This is a remarkable change from last month for Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States when the largest proportion of respondents felt that the disruption would be over by the end of June 2020.

In terms of the availability of emergency savings, the United States has the highest proportion of individuals who have any emergency fund (79.4 per cent), followed by the United Kingdom, Canada, and then Australia. Lack of emergency saving predicts a lower score on the Mental Health Index™ regardless of income.

Additional data and analyses

Industry scores, demographic breakdown of sub-scores, and specific cross-correlational and custom analyses as well as benchmarking against the national results or any sub-group, are available upon request. Contact MHI@morneaushepell.com

Personal disruption because of the COVID-19 pandemic is reported in all regions

For downloading the MHI for the four regions:





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 action by individuals, business and government.

The Mental Health Index™ report has three main parts:

1. The overall Mental Health Index™ (MHI), which is a measure of deviation from 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: For the current and immediately foreseeable future, the measures in this section relate to the mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 in Canada, 2,000 residents of the United Kingdom, and 1,000 residents in Australia. All of 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 May 2020 was collected between April 30 to May 11, 2020.

Collected through an online survey of 5,000 residents of the United States, 3,000 residents in Canada, 2,000 residents of the United Kingdom, and 1,000 residents in Australia



Calculations

To create The Mental Health Index™, the first step leverages a response scoring system that turns 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.

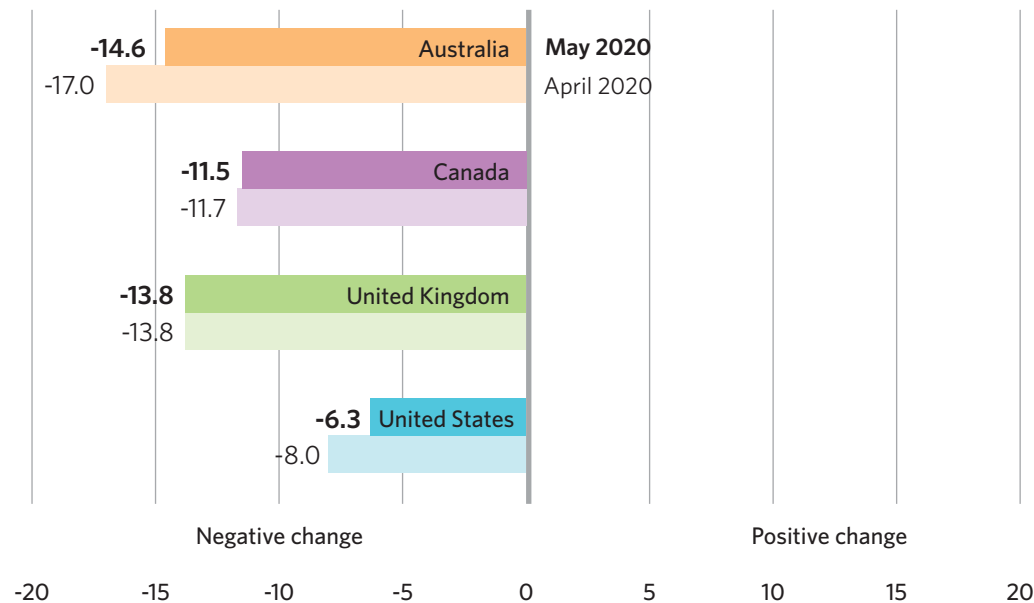
To demonstrate change, the current month's scores are then compared to the benchmark and the prior month. The benchmark is comprised of data from 2017, 2018 and 2019. This was a period of relative social stability and steady economic growth. **The deviation relative to the benchmark is the Mental Health 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 calculated as (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 and 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.



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

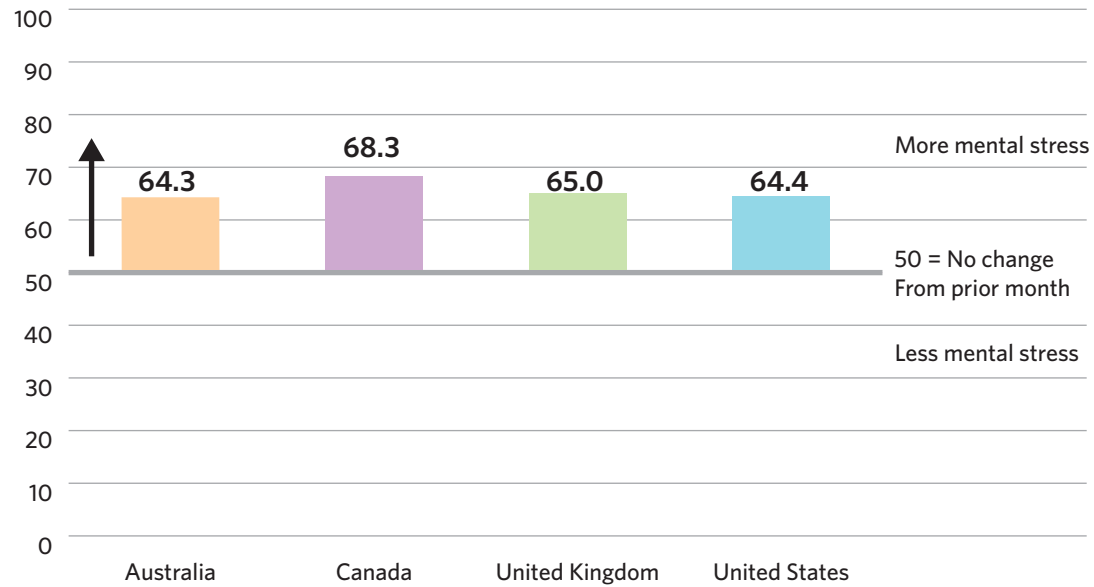
The Mental Health Index™ (region)



Overall, the Mental Health Index™ is lowest in Australia, followed by the United Kingdom, Canada, and then the United States. While some differences are evident, the Index for each region shows significant decline in mental health from the benchmark data. The greatest mental health improvement since last month was observed in Australia (2.4 points), followed by the United States (1.7 points), Canada (0.2 points), and the United Kingdom (0.1 points).



The Mental Stress Change score (region)

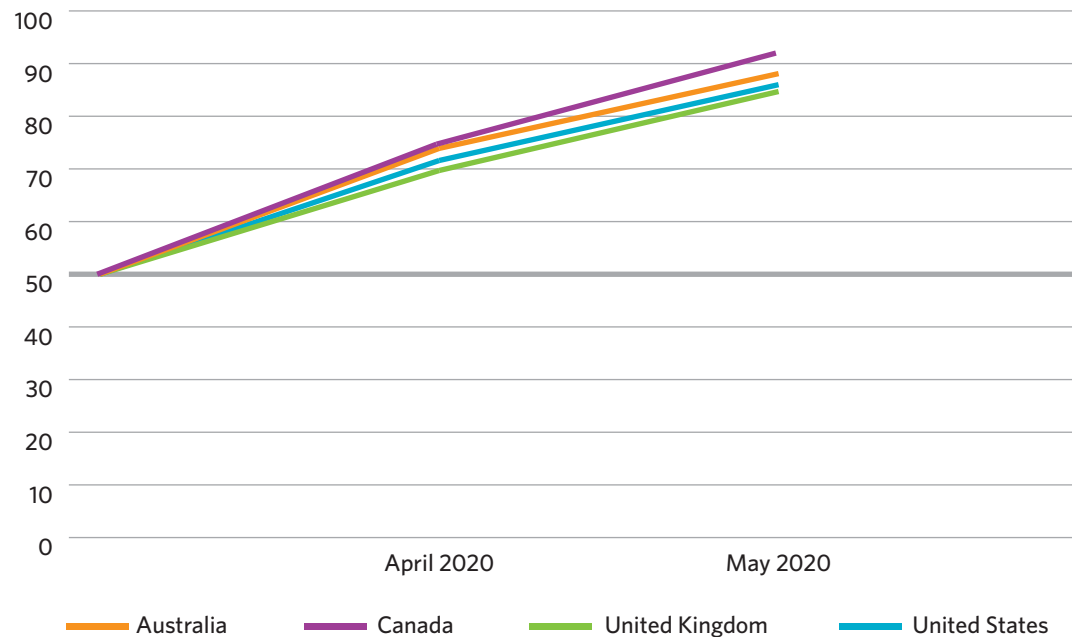


Comparing April 2020 to May 2020, there is a significant increase in mental stress in all regions. The increase is greatest in Canada, followed by the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia.



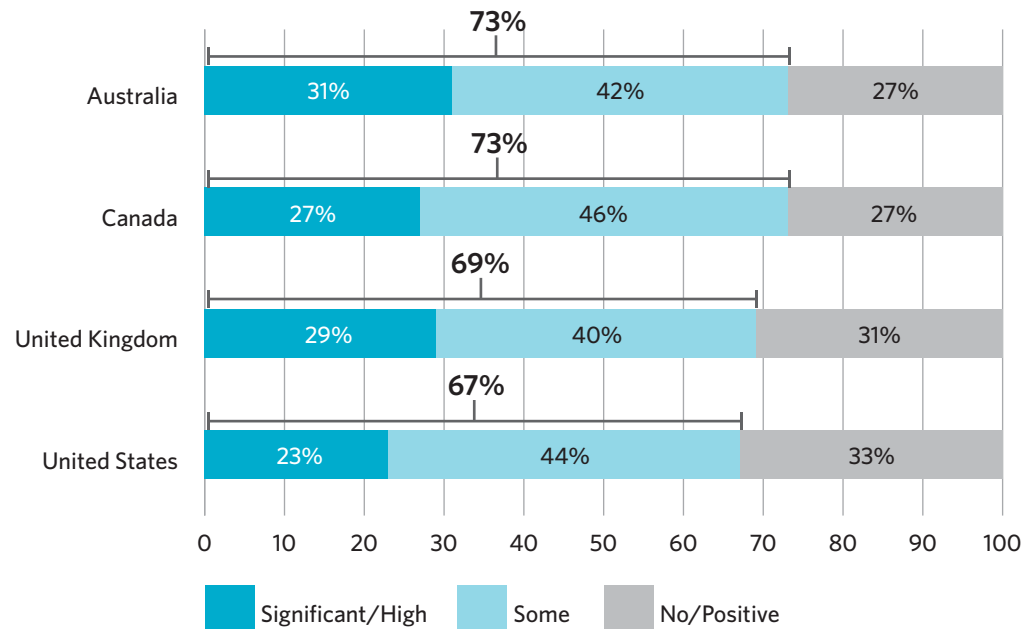
The Mental Stress Change (cumulative)

The Mental Stress Change (MStressChg) score 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 impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (region)



Seventy-three per cent of Australians and Canadians indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on their mental health. The proportion for the United Kingdom is 69 per cent and for the United States, it is 67 per cent. The proportion of respondents indicating a negative impact on their mental health has decreased slightly since April 2020 for all countries.



The mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic relates to: ²	Australia	Canada	United Kingdom	United States
The financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	57.3%	48.1%	41.1%	48.7%
A loved one dying from COVID-19	32.2%	38.8%	49.5%	39.5%
Getting ill with COVID-19	30.3%	36.1%	36.6%	36.7%
How the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting my family/relationships	29.1%	32.4%	30.6%	25.4%
Ongoing work strain/overwork due to the COVID-19 pandemic	27.3%	26.6%	22.0%	22.6%
Loneliness due to the COVID-19 pandemic	24.5%	23.3%	22.0%	20.3%
Not having food/ medicine/ healthcare for other issue as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic	12.1%	14.5%	12.9%	14.1%
Dying from COVID-19	11.8%	17.5%	23.7%	17.9%
Other	3.3%	4.8%	4.4%	4.9%

The top four concerns are the same for all regions and remain unchanged since April 2020. The most prevalent COVID-19 pandemic concern is financial for Australia, Canada and the United States, and similar to last month, Australia has the highest proportion of individuals where this is a concern. The most prevalent issue for the United Kingdom continues to be the fear of a loved one dying from COVID-19.

The prevalence of concern regarding individuals dying from COVID-19 themselves is higher in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada than it is in Australia.

² The charts reflect data from people who made a selection. The number of respondents making at least one selection are as follows: Australia (726), Canada (2,183), the United Kingdom (1,376), and the United States (3,350).

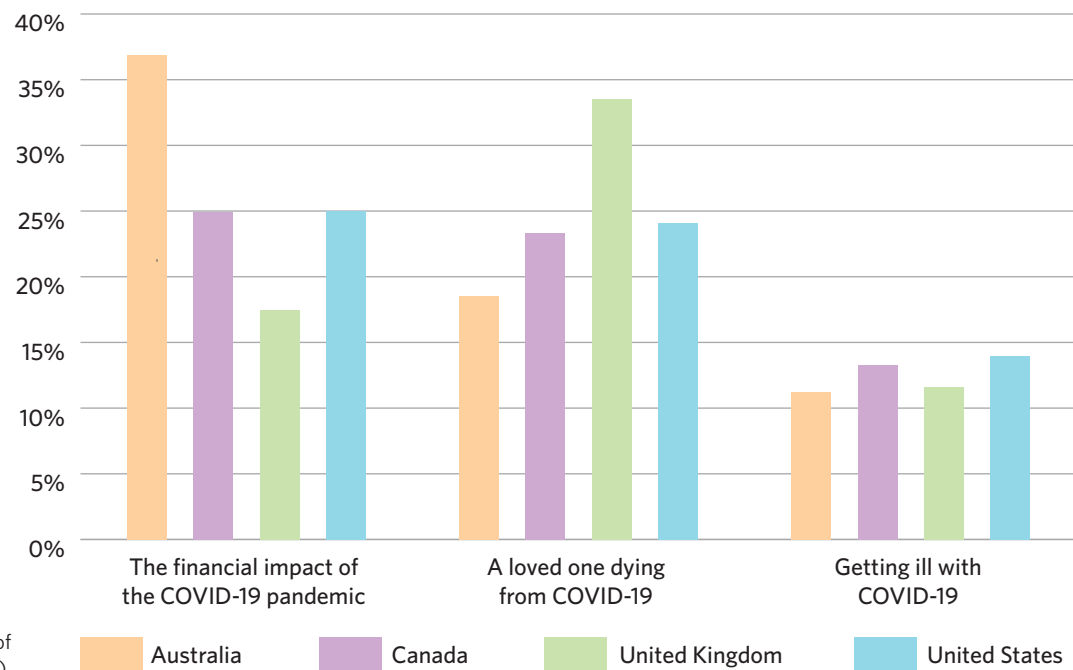


The single greatest concern / fear related to the COVID-19 pandemic: ³	Australia	Canada	United Kingdom	United States
The financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	36.9%	24.9%	17.5%	25.0%
A loved one dying from COVID-19	18.5%	23.3%	33.5%	24.1%
Getting ill with COVID-19	11.2%	13.3%	11.6%	14.0%
How the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting my family/relationships	9.0%	10.4%	8.0%	7.3%
Loneliness due to the COVID-19 pandemic	8.7%	7.2%	8.6%	6.8%
Ongoing work strain/overwork due to the COVID-19 pandemic	6.7%	6.7%	5.5%	7.1%
Dying from COVID-19	3.6%	8.0%	9.4%	7.9%
Not having food/ medicine/ healthcare for other issue as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic	2.8%	2.8%	2.5%	3.6%
Other	2.8%	3.3%	3.4%	4.2%

The top three concerns are the same for all regions. The single greatest COVID-19 pandemic concern impacting mental health is financial for Australia, Canada and the United States. This is a change for the United States as the greatest concern in April 2020 was a loved one dying from COVID-19. The single greatest concern for the United Kingdom remains the same as the prior month: fear of a loved one dying from COVID-19.

The fourth most significant concern continues to vary by region. Impact on family/relationships is the fourth greatest concern in Canada and Australia, a change from loneliness for Australia. Consistent with last month's survey, the fear of dying from COVID-19 is the fourth greatest concern in the United Kingdom and the United States.

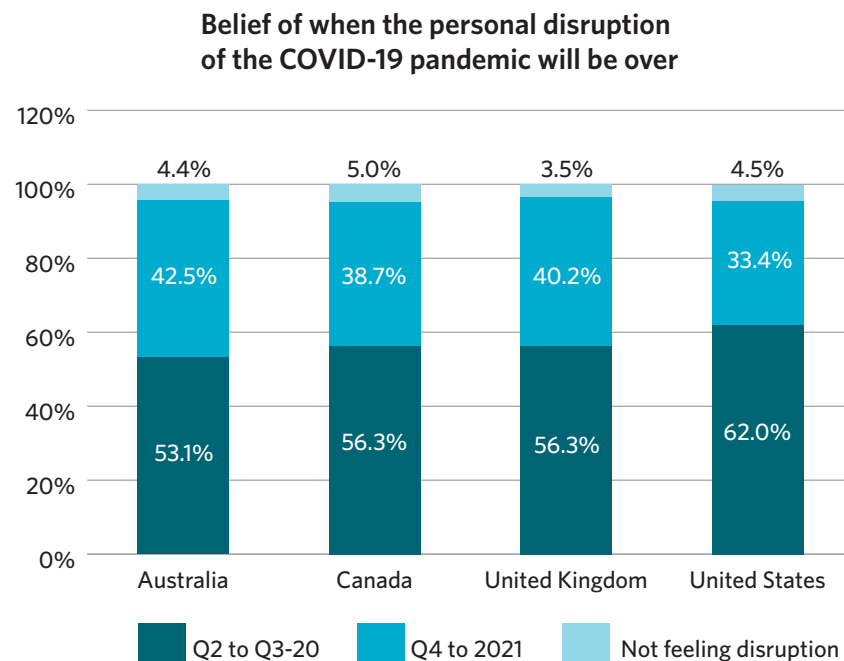
Single greatest COVID pandemic concerns: Top three



³ The charts reflect data from people who made a selection. The number of respondents making at least one selection are as follows: Australia (726), Canada (2183), the United Kingdom (1376), and the United States (3350).



Belief regarding when the personal disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic will be over	Australia	Canada	United Kingdom	United States
April	1.6%	1.8%	1.5%	1.4%
May	4.1%	3.2%	2.6%	5.0%
June	11.9%	12.3%	12.1%	15.5%
July	14.1%	14.5%	15.7%	17.1%
August	8.8%	9.3%	10.1%	12.1%
September	12.6%	15.1%	14.4%	11.0%
October	9.1%	5.2%	6.9%	4.9%
November	4.4%	2.4%	3.1%	2.4%
December	5.0%	2.8%	3.1%	2.3%
2021	24.0%	28.4%	27.2%	23.9%
I am not feeling any disruption	4.4%	5.0%	3.5%	4.5%



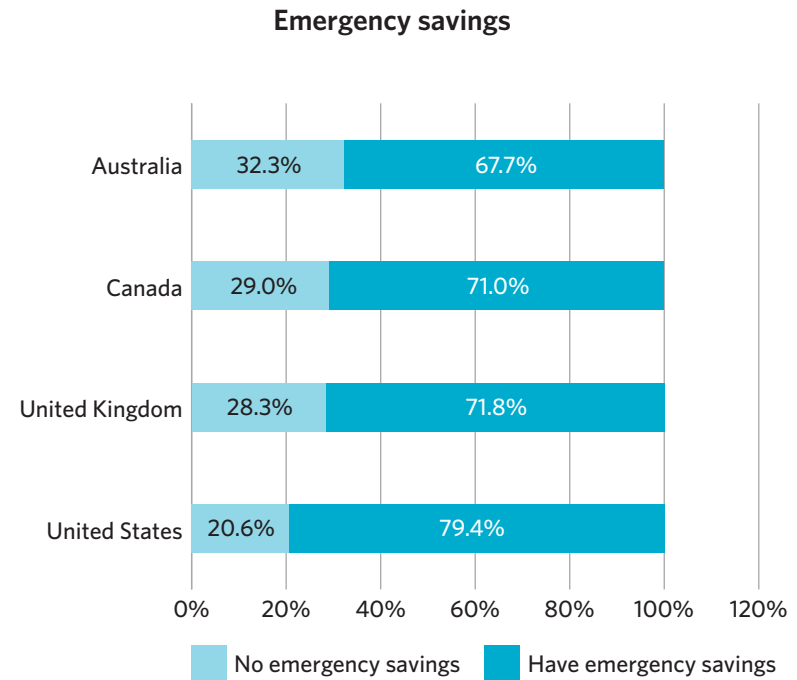
A considerable proportion of individuals in all regions report personal disruption because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the United Kingdom, 96.5 per cent of respondents reported some level of disruption, with 95.6 per cent in Australia, 95.5 per cent in the United States, and 95.0 per cent in Canada reporting some level of disruption.

In April 2020, the greatest proportion of Australians reported that they believe that their personal disruption will end in 2021, while the greatest proportion of respondents in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States believed the disruption would end by June 2020. In May, there was a shift in thinking among Canadians, Americans and UK citizens, who joined Australians in believing that the end of the disruption will be in 2021. Across all regions, the longer the personal disruption is believed to last, the more negative the Mental Health Index™ Score.



In terms of the availability of emergency savings, the United States has the highest proportion of individuals who have any emergency fund (79.4 per cent), followed by the United Kingdom, Canada, and then Australia. Lack of emergency saving predicts a lower score on the Mental Health Index™ regardless of income. Having emergency savings predicts a better Mental Health Index™ score.

For downloading the MHI for the four regions:



Morneau Shepell is a leading provider of technology-enabled HR services that deliver an integrated approach to employee wellbeing through our cloud-based platform. Our focus is providing world-class solutions to our clients to support the mental, physical, social and financial wellbeing of their people. By improving lives, we improve business. Our approach spans services in employee and family assistance, health and wellness, recognition, pension and benefits administration, retirement consulting, actuarial and investment services. Morneau Shepell employs approximately 6,000 employees who work with some 24,000 client organizations that use our services in 162 countries. Morneau Shepell inc. is a publicly traded company on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX: MSI). For more information, visit morneaushepell.com.



@Morneau_Shepell



Morneau Shepell