The Mental Health Index™ report

The United States, August 2020

LifeWorks
by Morneau Shepell

MORNEAU SHEPELL

Table of contents

Executive summary

Heading into the month of August, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are front and centre across the United States. The U.S. continues to report the highest cumulative COVID-19-case count globally. Daily coronavirus cases remain at high levels, trending slightly downward from the prior month.[1] Florida, California, Texas, Georgia and Tennessee continue to experience the highest number of confirmed daily new cases of COVID-19 with significant increases in the number of mortalities and case severity associated with this recent wave.[2] Due to this surge, most states have either reversed or paused their reopening plans, with some notable exceptions such as Tennessee and New York which is heading into its final phase of reopening. Hospitalization rates continue to be disproportionately higher (approximately 4.7 times) among non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic or Latino persons, than the rate among non-Hispanic White persons.[3]

Social restrictions and mask wearing orders are prevalent, varying from state to state. Across the U.S., the state of the economy and the safe reopening of schools continue to dominate the public agenda. As COVID-19 remains prevalent, many major public school systems are moving toward all-remote learning this Fall which will continue to impact parents who are grappling with balancing work and supporting learning, as well as exposing economic inequities such as access to the Internet and adequate childcare.[4]

---

1   https://covid19.who.int/region/amro/country/us
2   Teneo Risk -Coronovirus Daily Update – July 30, 2020
3   https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/covidview/index.html -Weekly update ending August 8, 2020
4   https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-08-05/chicago-schools-go-online-with-nyc-as-last-big-system-to-decide?srnd=coronavirus

LifeWorks by Morneau Shepell | MORNEAU SHEPELL

In the second quarter, the U.S. GDP experienced the largest drop in the country's history, affected by high unemployment rates, low consumer spending and government restrictions/lockdowns to fight the pandemic.[5] Decision makers and public health officials remain optimistic about vaccine development.

For the fifth consecutive month, the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to have an impact on the mental health of Americans, with a decline this month, reversing the trend toward modest improvement since April.

Mental Health Index™

The overall Mental Health Index™ for August 2020 is -6 points. This index represents the deviation from pre-2020 benchmark. A negative score indicates poorer mental health relative to the benchmark, and a positive score indicates better mental health. The benchmark reflects mental health data from 2017, 2018 and 2019. A 6-point decrease from the pre COVID-19 benchmark[6] reflects a population whose mental health is similar to the most distressed twenty-sixth percent of the benchmark population.

The lowest Mental Health Index™ sub-score is for the risk measure of optimism (-8.5), followed by anxiety (-7.3), depression (-6.7), isolation (-5.5), and work productivity (-5.3). The risk measure with the highest mental health score is financial risk (9.7), followed by general psychological health (2.5). However, the latter has declined when compared with the prior month (2.8).

- After a period of slow but steady improvement, the Mental Health Index™ score declined in the United States in August.

- All but two of the Mental Health Index™ sub-scores have worsened when compared to the prior month. Work productivity has improved from -5.5 in July to -5.3 in August and financial risk has remained the same as the prior month at 9.7.

- The financial risk score of 9.7 is above the pre-2020 benchmark. This indicates that Americans are saving more than they did before the pandemic and are increasing their saving month over month since the pandemic.

The overall Mental Health Index™ for August 2020 is -6 points, down one point from the prior month

---

5   https://www.cnbc.com/2020/07/30/us-gdp-q2-2020-first-reading.html
6   The raw score for the Mental Health Index™ benchmark is 75/100. The August 2020 score is 69/100.

- Individuals without emergency savings continue to experience a lower score in mental health (-21.6) than the overall group. Those reporing an emergency fund have an average mental health score of -1.7.

- Females (-7.6) continue to have a lower mental health score than males (-3.3); and as observed in prior months, mental health scores improve with age.

- Respondents identifying as Mixed (Non-Black) have the lowest mental health score (-11.6), followed by those identifying as Other (-11.1), which includes Arab/Middle Eastern/West Asian, Indigenous/Aboriginal, and Mixed (Black and other), and those identifying as South Asian (-10.8).

- Individuals identifying as White (-5.0) have the highest mental health score, followed by those identifying as Black (-6.1).

- There is a 5.8 point variance in the mental health score between those with one child (-10.2) and those without children (-4.4), with a lower score for those with one child. The gap between these two groups has been increasing since April.

From April to July, regional Mental Health Index™ scores have shown general improvement through July; however, all regions are showing declines in mental health from July to August. The largest decline in the mental health score is observed in the South (-0.7 points), followed by the Midwest and the West, both with -0.5 points, and the Northeast at -0.2 points.

Overall, 9 percent of respondents are unemployed. While most individuals remain employed, 17 percent report reduced hours or reduced salary since April 2020.

- Individuals reporting reduced salary when compared to the prior month have the lowest mental health score (-11.6), followed by individuals reporting reduced hours when compared to the prior month (-11.2), and those not currently employed (-8.1).

The highest mental health scores in August are observed among individuals employed in Construction (-2.1), Public Administration (-2.1), and Real Estate, Rental and Leasing (-2.7) industries.

- For the fifth consecutive month, full-time students have the lowest mental health score (-18.3). This continues to be significantly lower than the next lowest score, among individuals in Information and Cultural Industries (-12.4), and Management of Companies and Enterprises (-12.0).

From April to July, regional Mental Health Index™ scores have shown general improvement; however, declines are observed in all regions in August

- Individuals employed in Utilities, Wholesale Trade, and Construction have seen the greatest improvement in mental health since last month.

For the fifth consecutive month, the two key drivers of the Mental Health Index™ are financial risk and isolation.

Mental Stress Change

The Mental Stress Change score for August 2020 is 56.1. This indicates that 21 percent of the population is experiencing more mental stress compared to the prior month, with 9 percent experiencing less. This is the fifth consecutive month where the Mental Stress Change score reflects increased mental stress in the population overall. Considering geography, the greatest increase in stress month over month is for respondents living in the West (57.3), followed by the South (56.4), the Midwest (55.9), and the Northeast (54.8).

- The greatest increase in mental stress is seen in employed people with reduced salary (63.7), followed by employed people with reduced hours (60.8), when compared to unemployed people (57.3) and employed people with no change to salary or hours (54.8).

- As was reported in prior months, and as evidenced again in August, younger respondents are experiencing a greater increase in mental stress when compared to older respondents.

- Further, since April 2020, females have larger increases in mental stress when compared with males.

- Respondents identifying as Pacific Islander have the least favorable mental stress change score (59.5), followed by those identifying as Mixed (Other) (58.7), and those identifying as Latin, South or Central American (56.7).

- Individuals identifying as Black have the most favorable mental stress change score (51.1), followed by those identifying as South Asian (55.3).

Mental Stress Change scores for the Students, the Transportation and Warehousing as well as the Construction industries are less steep when compared to the prior month.

- Individuals working in Information and Cultural Industries have the most significant increase in Mental Stress Change score (61.0) followed by indviduals employed in Accommodation (60.0), and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (59.9).

For the fifth consecutive month, the two key drivers of the Mental Health Index™ are financial risk and isolation

Additional findings

The impact of the ongoing pandemic on mental health

In June, individuals were asked to report the main emotion they were experiencing most often. The same question was repeated in August and similar to the June findings, frustration (22 percent), worry (21 percent), and calm (17 percent) are the most commonly reported emotions.

- Consistent with the June findings, individuals reporting positive emotions (i.e. calm, happiness, hopefulness, or gratitude) have much higher Mental Health Index™ scores than individuals reporting negative emotions (i.e. anger, disbelief, frustration, helplessness, and worry).

- This further validates the suggestion from June that an individual's personal outlook contributes significantly to how well that individual is coping with the strain of the pandemic and that this effect is reflected in the Mental Health Index™ scores.

- In August, 55 percent note negative emotions. The proportions are largely the same as observed in June.

Using text analysis when respondents were asked to explain their emotion, certain frequently occuring words appearing in the responses were selected and the average mental health score of individuals using each word was determined.

- Individuals using words and ideas such as gratefulness, health, and hope have an average mental health score above the pre-pandemic benchmark.

- Individuals using words and ideas such as stress, COVID, work, economy, or uncertainty have significantly lower mental health scores than the pre-pandemic benchmark.

- Those using the word money have the lowest mental health score.

Likelihood of a return to the pre-pandemic state

- Forty-four percent of respondents feel that it is unlikely that things will return to the pre-pandemic state, with 24 percent undecided.

- The mental health score for individuals feeling that it is very unlikely that things will return to the pre-pandemic state is the lowest (-11.8).

Individuals who report adapting poorly to changes in their personal life have a mental health score nineteen points below individuals who report adapting well to change in this area

LifeWorks
by Morneau Shepell | MORNEAU SHEPELL

- An increasing trend in mental health scores is observed from very unlikely (-11.8) to very likely (4.1).

Top of mind issues

- The most commonly reported top of mind issue is the ongoing impact of the pandemic related to finances and the economy (40 percent). This is followed by the ongoing impact of the pandemic not related to finances and the economy (26 percent), the upcoming U.S. election (15 percent), other (8 percent), change of plans for major life events (7 percent), and anti-racism (4 percent).

- The lowest mental health score is among individuals reporting that their top of mind issue is a change of plans for a major life event (-12.5).

- The mental health score for individuals reporting that their top of mind issue is the upcoming U.S. election is considerably higher (2.7) than the mental health scores of individuals reporting any of the other issues.

- Individuals that selected 'Other' as a top of mind issue were prompted to input a text response. Text analysis revealed that the most commonly reported other issues relate to COVID-19, health, work, impact, life, and family.

Adaptation

Respondents were asked to report how well they feel that they are adapting financially, to changes to their work life, and to changes to their personal life. The results suggest that where there is difficulty adapting, it is more likely to be in one's personal life than either work or finances.

- Thirty-one percent of respondents are undecided or feel that they are adapting poorly to changes in their personal life or personal routine, and their mental health score is lower than other groups (-18.9) and significanlty lower than the average (-6).

- Twenty-six percent of respondents are undecided or feel that they are adapting poorly to changes in their work life or work routine, and their mental health score is -18.8.

- Twenty-six percent of respondents are undecided or feel that they are adapting poorly to changes in their finances, and their mental health score is -18.8.

- Seventy-four percent of respondents feel that they are adapting well to changes in their finances, and these individuals have mental health scores averaging -0.9.

Forty percent of respondents indicated that their top of mind issue is the ongoing impact of the pandemic related to finances and the economy

- Seventy-four percent of respondents feel that they are adapting well to changes in their work life or work routine, and these individuals have mental health scores averaging -1.0.

- Sixty-nine percent of respondents feel that they are adapting well to changes in their personal life or personal routine, and these individuals have mental health scores averaging 0.3.

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

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 an online survey of 5,000 Americans who are living in the United States and are currently employed or who were employed within the prior six months. Participants were selected to be representative of the age, gender, industry and geographic distribution in the United States. 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 in April 2020. The benchmark data was collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The data for the current report was collected between July 21 to July 31, 2020.

Collected through an online survey of 5,000 Americans

LifeWorks
by Morneau Shepell

MORNEAU
SHEPELL

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.

The Mental Health Index™

The Mental Health Index™ (MHI) is a measure of deviation from the benchmark[7] of mental health and risk.

MHI	
Current month August 2020	**-6**
July 2020	-5

MHI sub-scores[8]	August	July
Optimism	-8.5	-8.0
Anxiety	-7.3	-6.4
Depression	-6.7	-6.1
Isolation	-5.5	-4.8
Work productivity	-5.3	-5.5
Psychological health	2.5	2.8
Financial risk	9.7	9.7

-8 April 2020
-6 May 2020
-6 June 2020
-5 July 2020
-6 August 2020

Negative   Positive

-15   -10   -5   0   5   10   15
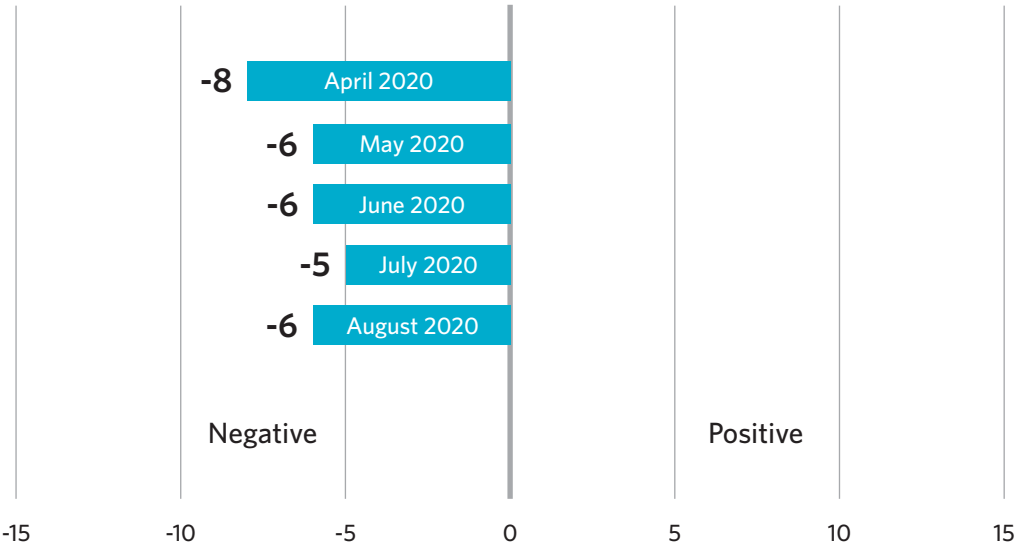
The overall Mental Health Index™ is -6 and continues to reside below the benchmark for the fifth consecutive month. The current score of 69 is equivalent to the twenty-sixth percentile of the benchmark.

---

7   The benchmark reflects data collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019.
8   The demographic breakdown of sub-scores are available upon request.

Employment status	August	July
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	**-4.1**	**-3.5**
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	-11.2	**-10.3**
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	**-11.6**	-10.1
Not currently employed	-8.1	-7.4

Age group	August	July
Age 20-29	**-14.7**	**-13.8**
Age 30-39	-12.4	-11.0
Age 40-49	-6.4	-6.6
Age 50-59	-2.5	-2.5
Age 60-69	**1.2**	**1.9**

Number of children	August	July
No children in household	**-4.4**	**-4.1**
1 child	**-10.2**	**-9.1**
2 children	-7.7	-7.8
3 children or more	-8.0	**-4.1**

Region	August	July
Northeast	-5.7	-5.5
Midwest	**-4.7**	**-4.2**
South	-5.6	-4.9
West	**-6.3**	**-5.8**

Gender	August	July
Male	**-3.3**	**-2.9**
Female	**-7.6**	**-7.0**

Income	August	July
Household Income <$30K/annum	**-14.0**	**-13.3**
$30K to <$60K/annum	-8.7	-8.2
$60K to <$100K	-5.0	-5.0
$100K to <$150K	-3.8	-2.9
$150K and over	**0.5**	**1.5**

Racial identification	August	July
Black	-6.1	-7.3
East Asian	-6.6	-6.6
Latin, South or Central American	-9.4	-8.7
Pacific Islander	-6.3	-10.6
South Asian	-10.8	-7.6
South East Asian	-6.3	-7.4
White	**-5.0**	**-4.2**
Mixed (Other)	**-11.6**	**-11.1**
Prefer not to answer	-4.5	-6.7
Other*	-11.1	-13.9

* Included in this category are Arab/Middle Eastern/West Asian, Indigenous/Aboriginal, and Mixed (Black and other) as the minimum threshold for reporting was not met for each group.

Employer size	August	July
Self-employed/sole proprietor	-3.8	-3.4
2-50 employees	-5.6	-5.0
51-100 employees	**-8.1**	**-8.2**
101-500 employees	-7.2	-6.4
501-1,000 employees	**-8.1**	-7.5
1,001-5,000 employees	-6.1	-4.9
5,001-10,000 employees	**-2.8**	-3.2
More than 10,000 employees	**-2.8**	**-2.4**

Numbers highlighted in **orange** are the most negative scores in the group.

Numbers highlighted in **green** are the least negative scores in the group.

Available upon request:
Specific cross-correlational and custom analyses

LifeWorks
by Morneau Shepell

MORNEAU SHEPELL

The Mental Health Index™ (industry)

The mental health of individuals across industries can differ immensely depending upon market and societal conditions. The highest mental health scores are observed in Construction (-2.1), Public Administration (-2.1), and Real Estate, Rental and Leasing (-2.7). Full-time students (-18.3) have the lowest mental health score followed by individuals in Information and Cultural Industries (-12.4), and Management of Companies and Enterprises (-12.0). Improvements from the prior month are shown in the table below:

Industry	August 2020 MHI	July 2020 MHI	Improvement
Utilities	-4.0	-8.1	4.2
Wholesale Trade	-9.0	-12.3	3.3
Construction	-2.1	-4.8	2.8
Accommodation	-8.8	-11.0	2.2
Public Administration	-2.1	-3.9	1.7
I am a student	-18.3	-19.6	1.4
Other services (except Public Administration)	-3.2	-4.3	1.1
Management of Companies and Enterprises	-12.0	-13.0	1.0
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	-2.7	-3.4	0.7
Information and Cultural Industries	-12.4	-13.1	0.7
Administrative and Support services	-7.7	-8.3	0.5
Retail Trade	-6.7	-7.1	0.4
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	-2.7	-2.5	-0.2
Finance and Insurance	-3.6	-3.0	-0.6
Manufacturing	-4.4	-3.7	-0.7
Transportation and Warehousing	-3.9	-2.8	-1.0
Food Services	-11.3	-10.0	-1.4
Educational Services	-5.6	-4.1	-1.5
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	-6.3	-4.5	-1.8
Health Care and Social Assistance	-6.1	-4.3	-1.8
Other	-5.6	-2.9	-2.7
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	-9.5	-6.3	-3.2

For the fifth consecutive month, full-time students have the lowest mental health score

LifeWorks
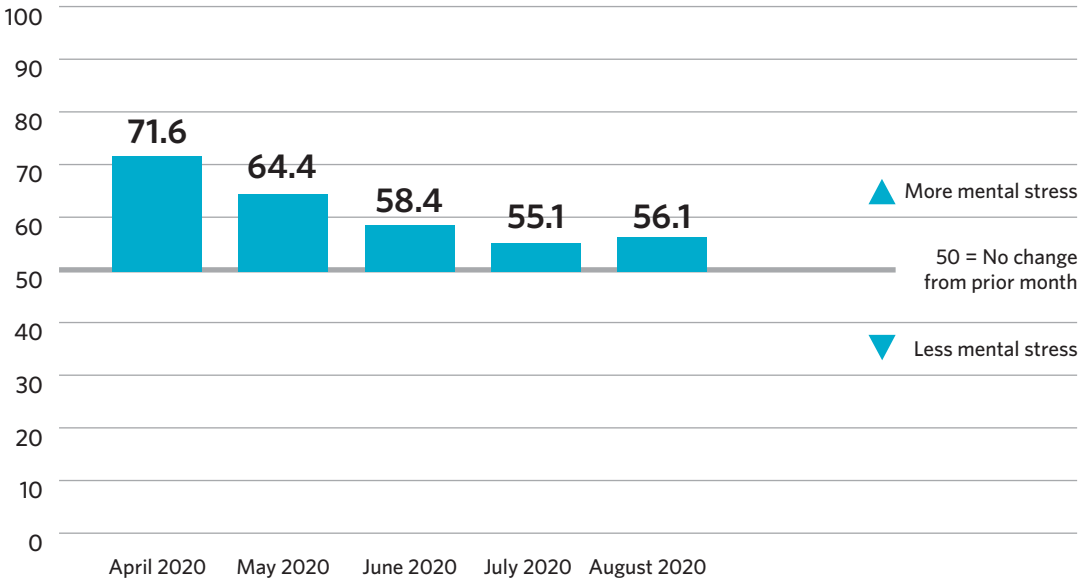by Morneau Shepell

MORNEAU SHEPELL

The Mental Stress Change score

The Mental Stress Change (MStressChg) score is a measure of the level of reported mental stress, compared to the prior month.

MStress Chg

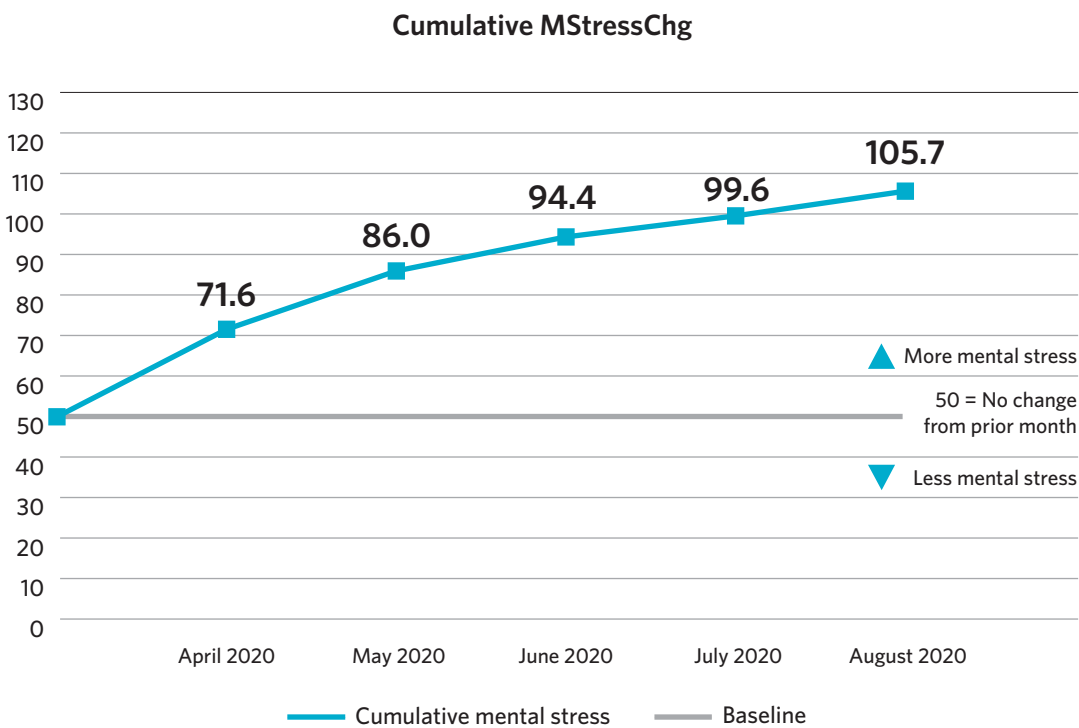|	
Current month August 2020	**56.1**
July 2020	55.1

The Mental Stress Change score for August 2020 is 56.1. This reflects an increase in mental stress when compared to the prior month. The steepness of the increase has been declining month-over-month since April; however, it increased modestly in August. The current score indicates that 21 percent of the population is experiencing more mental stress compared to the prior month, with 9 percent experiencing less. A continued increase in mental stress over the last five months, when compared to the benchmark, indicates a significant accumulation of strain in the population.

Chart showing Mental Stress Change scores: April 2020: 71.6, May 2020: 64.4, June 2020: 58.4, July 2020: 55.1, August 2020: 56.1. ▲ More mental stress. 50 = No change from prior month. ▼ Less mental stress.

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 cumulative mental stress score is shown in the graph below:

Cumulative MStressChg

▲ More mental stress

50 = No change from prior month

▼ Less mental stress

Data points:
71.6 (April 2020), 86.0 (May 2020), 94.4 (June 2020), 99.6 (July 2020), 105.7 (August 2020)

Legend: —— Cumulative mental stress   —— Baseline

Employment status	August	July
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	**54.8**	**54.2**
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	60.8	57.4
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	**63.7**	**62.4**
Not currently employed	57.3	54.9

Age group	August	July
Age 20-29	57.8	**58.2**
Age 30-39	**58.6**	**58.2**
Age 40-49	56.9	55.9
Age 50-59	55.1	54.1
Age 60-69	**53.9**	**51.6**

Number of children	August	July
No children in household	**55.4**	**54.4**
1 child	58.4	**57.4**
2 children	57.4	57.1
3 children or more	**61.1**	56.6

Region	August	July
Northeast	**54.8**	**55.6**
Midwest	55.9	**54.9**
South	56.4	**54.9**
West	**57.3**	55.0

Gender	August	July
Male	**55.2**	**54.0**
Female	**57.0**	**56.1**

Income	August	July
Household Income <$30K/annum	**57.4**	54.2
$30K to <$60K/annum	57.1	**56.4**
$60k to <$100K	56.5	55.5
$100K to <$150K	57.1	55.1
$150K and over	**52.8**	**53.4**

Racial identification	August	July
Black	**51.1**	53.4
East Asian	56.6	55.9
Latin, South or Central American	56.7	**60.9**
Pacific Islander	**59.5**	59.5
South Asian	55.3	**50.6**
South East Asian	56.0	54.2
White	56.6	55.0
Mixed (Other)	58.7	60.1
Prefer not to answer	46.4	52.7
Other*	52.5	56.0

* Included in this category are Arab/Middle Eastern/West Asian, Indigenous/Aboriginal, and Mixed (Black and other) as the minimum threshold for reporting was not met for each group.

Employer size	August	July
Self-employed/sole proprietor	**54.4**	**52.5**
2-50 employees	55.1	54.0
51-100 employees	56.3	56.3
101-500 employees	57.1	54.5
501-1,000 employees	**59.5**	**60.8**
1,001-5,000 employees	57.6	55.4
5,001-10,000 employees	55.7	55.4
More than 10,000 employees	55.0	54.6

Numbers highlighted in **orange** are the most negative scores in the group.

Numbers highlighted in **green** are the least negative scores in the group.

Available upon request:
Specific cross-correlational and custom analyses

The Mental Stress Change (industry)

The mental health of those across industries can differ immensely depending upon market and societal conditions. The most favorable mental stress changes are observed in Transportation and Warehousing (50.6), among full-time students (51.1), and in the Construction (53.6) industry. The least favorable mental stress changes are found in Information and Cultural Industries (61.0), Accommodation (60.0), and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (59.9). Mental Stress changes from the last two months are shown in the table below:

Industry	August 2020 MStress Chg	July 2020 MStress Chg
Transportation and Warehousing	50.6	52.4
I am a student	51.1	53.5
Construction	53.6	55.9
Other	53.9	53.5
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	54.5	53.5
Administrative and Support services	54.7	56.7
Utilities	55.3	56.4
Wholesale Trade	55.3	58.4
Finance and Insurance	55.5	53.3
Educational Services	56.3	55.5
Retail Trade	56.3	54.8
Manufacturing	56.5	54.7
Public Administration	56.6	54.2
Other services (except Public Administration)	56.8	54.6
Food Services	57.1	54.1
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	57.2	54.6
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	58.4	57.2
Health Care and Social Assistance	58.4	56.4
Management of Companies and Enterprises	58.8	59.2
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	59.9	57.4
Accommodation	60.0	58.1
Information and Cultural Industries	61.0	58.3

LifeWorks by Morneau Shepell | MORNEAU SHEPELL

Mental health trends by region

From April to July, regional Mental Health Index™ scores have shown general improvement; however, all regions are showing declines in mental health from July to August.

The largest decline in mental health score is observed in the South (-0.7), followed by the Midwest and the West, both with -0.5 points, and the Northeast (-0.2).

United States Mental Health Index™ scores

July to August change
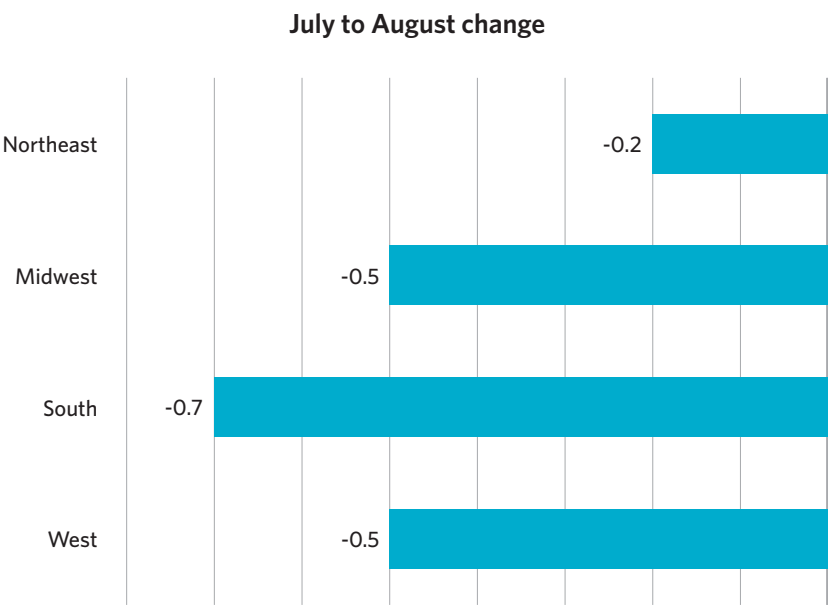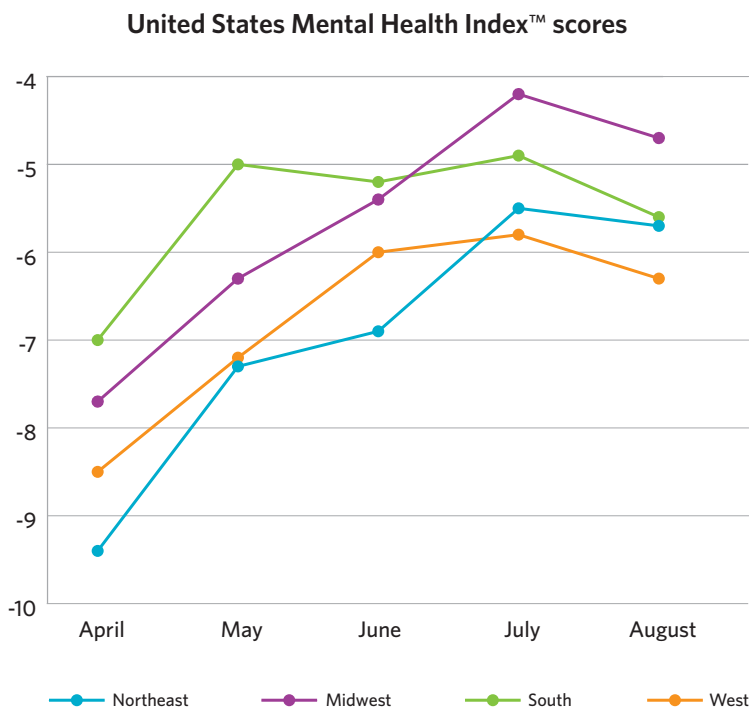
The impact of the ongoing pandemic on mental health
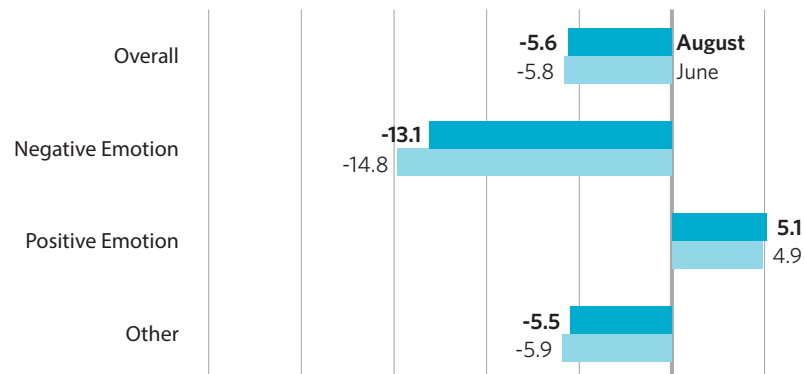
Main emotion being felt most often right now

In June, individuals were asked to report the main emotion they were experiencing most often. The same question was repeated in August and similar to the June findings, frustration (22 percent), worry (21 percent), and calm (17 percent) are the most commonly reported emotions.
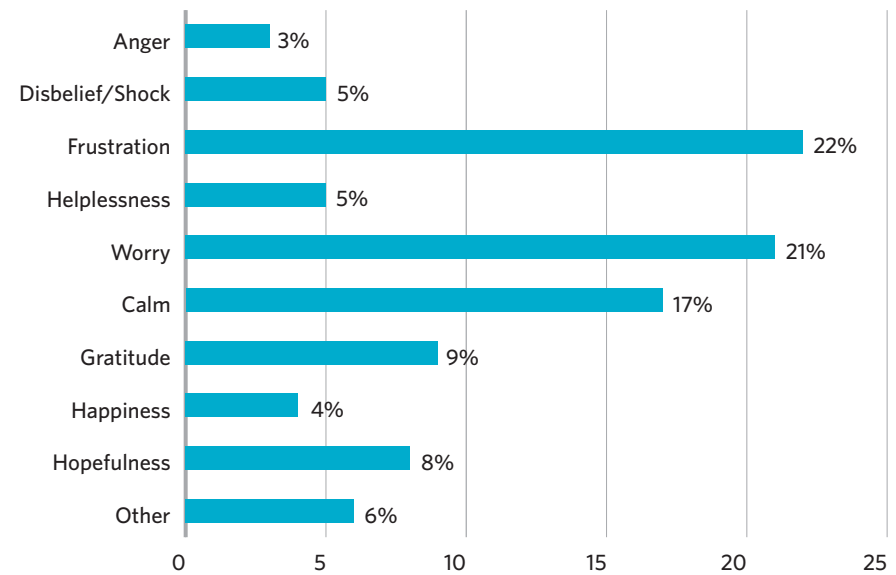
Consistent with the June findings, individuals reporting positive emotions (i.e. calm, happiness, hopefulness, or gratitude) have much higher Mental Health Index™ scores than individuals reporting negative emotions (i.e. anger, disbelief, frustration, helplessness, and worry).

When comparing the overall positive and negative emotions from June and August, similar Mental Health Index™ scores are observed.
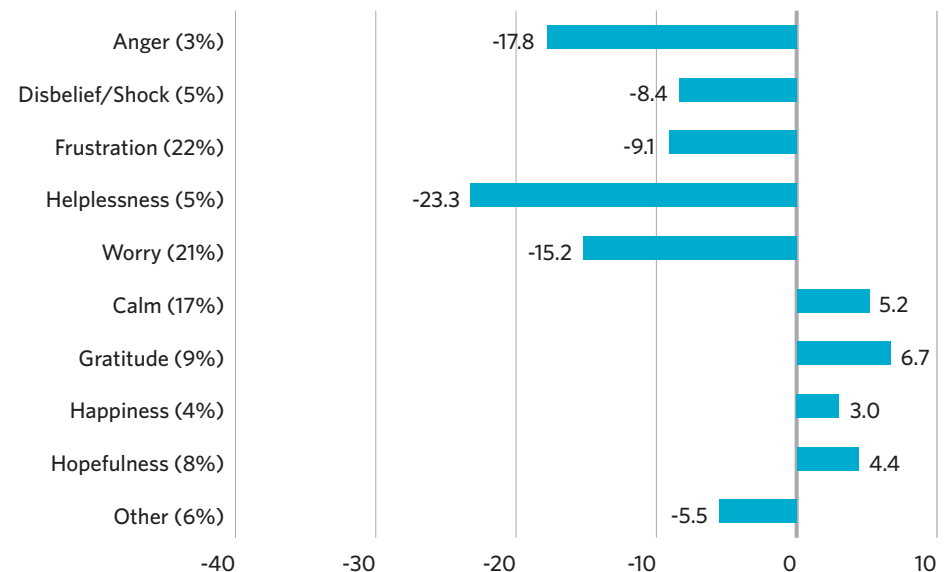
Main emotion felt most often right now

Emotion	Value
Anger	3%
Disbelief/Shock	5%
Frustration	22%
Helplessness	5%
Worry	21%
Calm	17%
Gratitude	9%
Happiness	4%
Hopefulness	8%
Other	6%

Comparison of emotion type and MHI score from June to August

	August	June
Overall	-5.6	-5.8
Negative Emotion	-13.1	-14.8
Positive Emotion	5.1	4.9
Other	-5.5	-5.9

Main emotion felt most often right now and MHI score

Emotion	MHI score
Anger (3%)	-17.8
Disbelief/Shock (5%)	-8.4
Frustration (22%)	-9.1
Helplessness (5%)	-23.3
Worry (21%)	-15.2
Calm (17%)	5.2
Gratitude (9%)	6.7
Happiness (4%)	3.0
Hopefulness (8%)	4.4
Other (6%)	-5.5

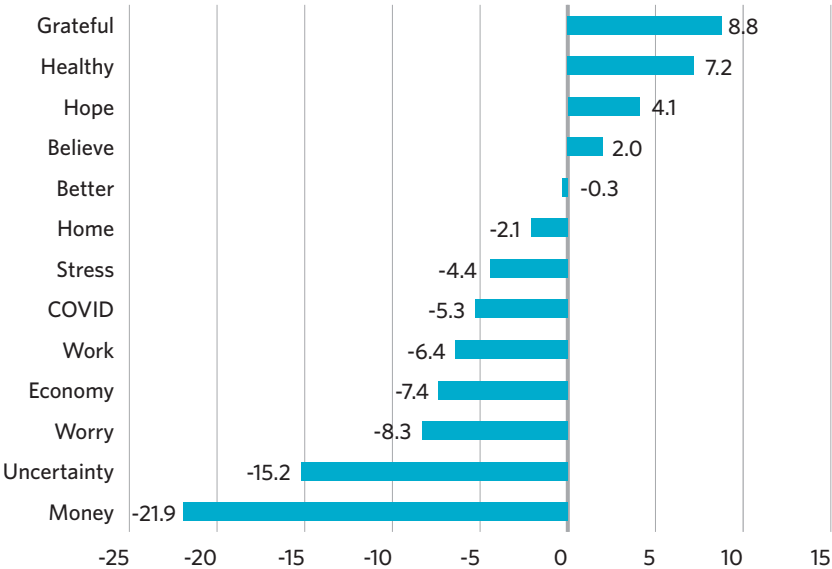LifeWorks by Morneau Shepell | MORNEAU SHEPELL

In August, a follow-up question was included asking respondents to express the reason for selecting the main emotion they reported feeling. Using text analysis, certain frequently occurring words appearing in the responses were selected and the average mental health score of individuals using each word was determined.

Individuals using words and ideas such as gratefulness, health, and hope have an average mental health score above the pre-pandemic benchmark. Individuals using words and ideas such as stress, COVID, work, economy, or uncertainty have significantly lower mental health scores than the pre-pandemic benchmark. Those using the word money have the lowest mental health score.

Word usage and Mental Health Index™ scores

Word	Score
Grateful	8.8
Healthy	7.2
Hope	4.1
Believe	2.0
Better	-0.3
Home	-2.1
Stress	-4.4
COVID	-5.3
Work	-6.4
Economy	-7.4
Worry	-8.3
Uncertainty	-15.2
Money	-21.9

"Worried about my health, my parents' health, job, recession, presidential election, etc."

"I feel overwhelmed. Although the emotion is usually fleeting, my workload and space keep changing."

"I have accepted what I can't change and I am making the best of the situation as it is now."

"The unknowing side of this, unable to make real plans or things to look forward to."

"I don't know if I will have a job, if my family will stay healthy and be able to financially survive."
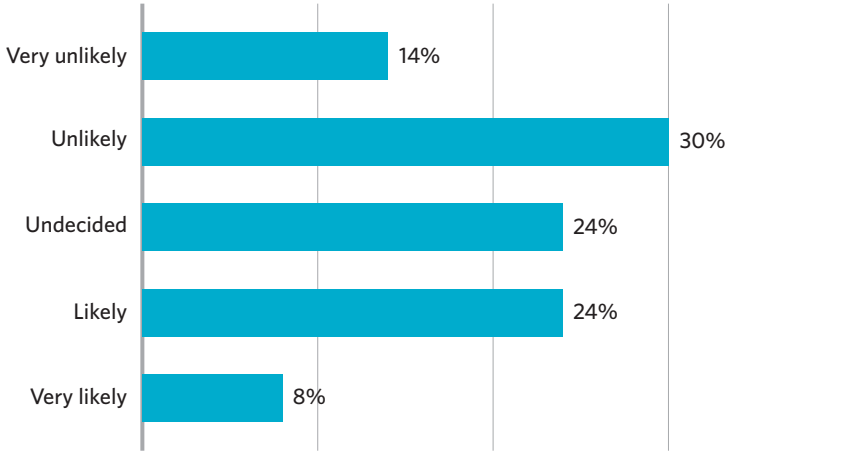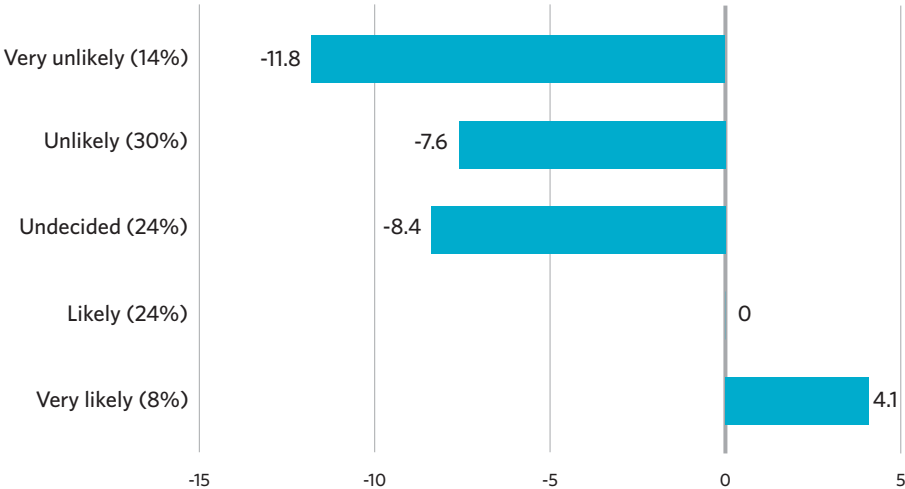
Likelihood of a return to the pre-pandemic state

Individuals were asked how likely it is that things will return to the pre-pandemic state. Forty-four percent of respondents feel that it is unlikely that things will return to the pre-pandemic state, with 24 percent undecided.

The mental health score for individuals feeling that it is very unlikely that things will return to the pre-pandemic state is the lowest (-11.8). An increasing trend in mental health scores is observed from very unlikely (-11.8) to very likely (4.1).

Likelihood of return to pre-pandemic state

Very unlikely	14%
Unlikely	30%
Undecided	24%
Likely	24%
Very likely	8%

Likelihood of return to pre-pandemic state: MHI scores

Very unlikely (14%)	-11.8
Unlikely (30%)	-7.6
Undecided (24%)	-8.4
Likely (24%)	0
Very likely (8%)	4.1

LifeWorks
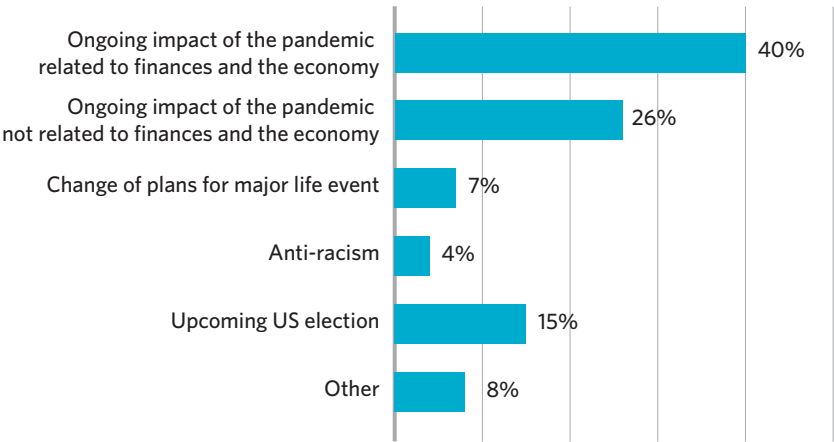by Morneau Shepell

MORNEAU
SHEPELL

Top of mind issues

The most commonly reported top of mind issue is the ongoing impact of the pandemic related to finances and the economy (40 percent). This is followed by the ongoing impact of the pandemic not related to finances and the economy (26 percent), the upcoming U.S. election (15 percent), other (8 percent), change of plans for major life events (7 percent), and anti-racism (4 percent).
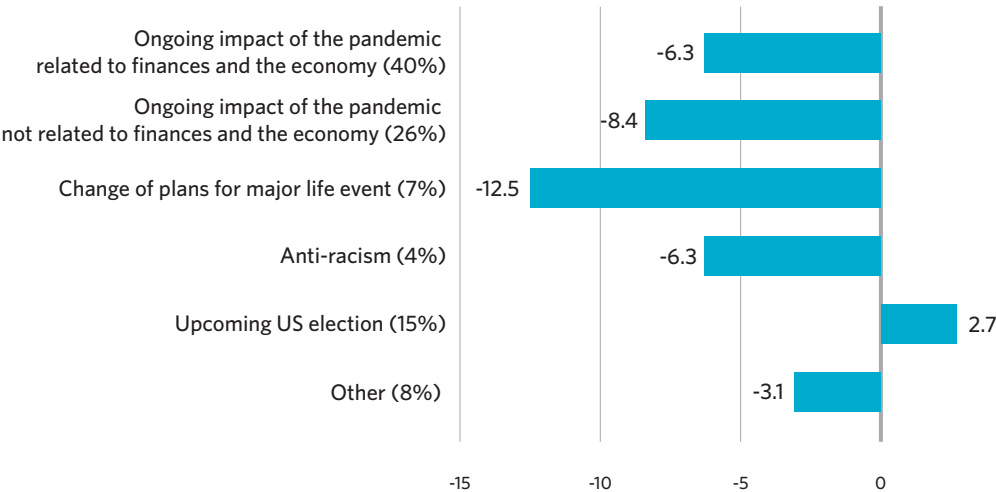
The lowest mental health score is among individuals reporting that their top of mind issue is a change of plans for a major life event (-12.5).
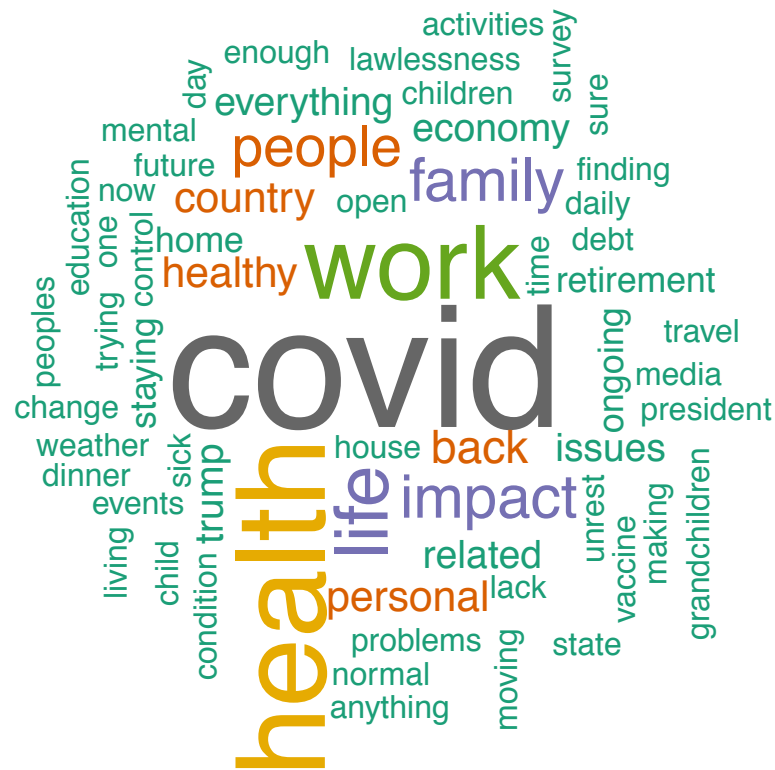
The mental health score for individuals reporting that their top of mind issue is the upcoming U.S. election is considerably higher (2.7).

Top of Mind Issues

Issue	Percent
Ongoing impact of the pandemic related to finances and the economy	40%
Ongoing impact of the pandemic not related to finances and the economy	26%
Change of plans for major life event	7%
Anti-racism	4%
Upcoming US election	15%
Other	8%

Top of Mind Issues: MHI scores

Issue	MHI score
Ongoing impact of the pandemic related to finances and the economy (40%)	-6.3
Ongoing impact of the pandemic not related to finances and the economy (26%)	-8.4
Change of plans for major life event (7%)	-12.5
Anti-racism (4%)	-6.3
Upcoming US election (15%)	2.7
Other (8%)	-3.1

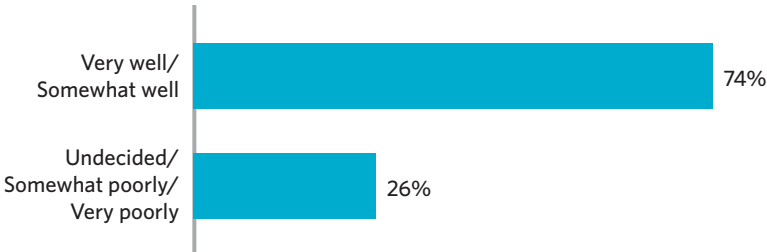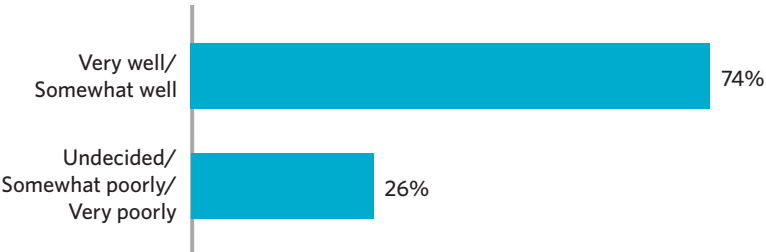LifeWorks
by Morneau Shepell

MORNEAU SHEPELL

Individuals that selected 'Other' as a top of mind issue were prompted to input a text response. Text analysis revealed that the most commonly reported other issues relate to COVID-19, health, work, impact, life, and family.
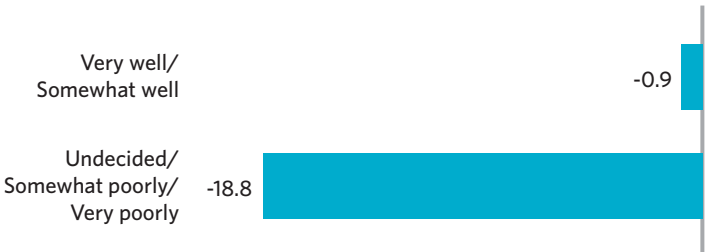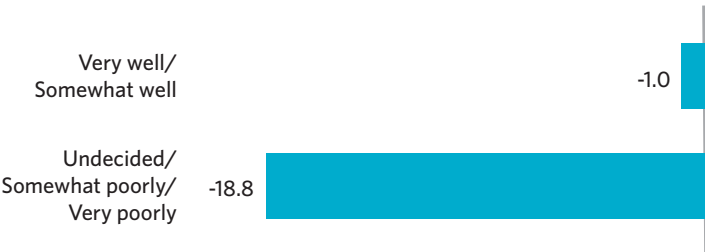
Financial adaptation

Very well/
Somewhat well — 74%

Undecided/
Somewhat poorly/
Very poorly — 26%

Change to my work life/routine adaptation

Very well/
Somewhat well — 74%

Undecided/
Somewhat poorly/
Very poorly — 26%

Financial adaptation: MHI scores

Very well/
Somewhat well — -0.9

Undecided/
Somewhat poorly/
Very poorly — -18.8

Change to my work life/routine adaptation: MHI scores

Very well/
Somewhat well — -1.0
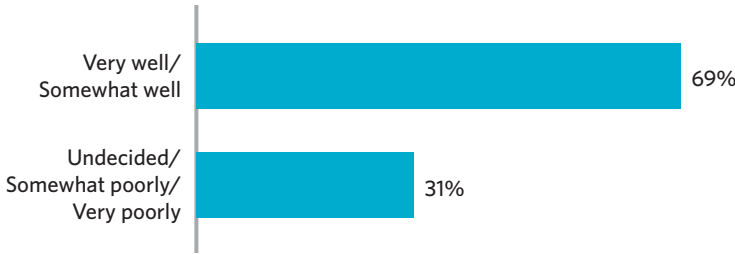
Undecided/
Somewhat poorly/
Very poorly — -18.8

Adaptation

Respondents were asked to report how well they feel that they are adapting financially, to changes to their work life, and to changes to their personal life. The results suggest that where there is difficulty adapting, it is more likely to be in one's personal life than either work or finances. Seventy-four percent of respondents feel that they are adapting well to changes in their finances, and these individuals have mental health scores averaging -0.9, whereas twenty-six percent of respondents are undecided or feel that they are adapting poorly to changes in their finances, and their mental health score is -18.8.

Seventy-four percent of respondents feel that they are adapting well to changes in their work life or work routine, and these individuals have mental health scores averaging -1.0, whereas twenty-six percent of respondents are undecided or feel that they are adapting poorly to changes in their work life or work routine, and their mental health score is -18.8.

Change to my personal life/routine adaptation

Very well/ Somewhat well	69%
Undecided/ Somewhat poorly/ Very poorly	31%

Change to my personal life/routine adaptation: MHI scores

Very well/ Somewhat well	0.3
Undecided/ Somewhat poorly/ Very poorly	-18.9

Sixty-nine percent of respondents feel that they are adapting well to changes in their personal life or personal routine, and these individuals have mental health scores averaging -0.3, whereas thirty-one percent of respondents are undecided or feel that they are adapting poorly to changes in their personal life or personal routine, and their mental health score is lower than other groups (-18.9) and significanlty lower than the average (-6.0).

Implications

The current scores for The Mental Health Index™ are a clear warning regarding the mental health impact of the pandemic. The Index shows a significant decrease in mental health in the United States. We also see a significant increase in mental stress compared to the prior month and a definitive link to issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the physical health risk of COVID-19 is the focus of much attention, the mental health impact requires similar attention and action. Well after the risk of infection reduces, the mental health impact may remain. This has implications for the quality of life of individuals, the stability of families, the risk of health and disability costs for organizations as well as the level of participation in the economy, which is a concern for government, given its impact on the speed of economic recovery.

To address this situation, action is required on at least three levels:

1. **Individuals** need to attend to the impact of the pandemic on their mental health. While some strain would be expected as a result of such a massive change, feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope, or feeling stuck and unable to adapt, are clear warning signs requiring support from a trusted confidant or a counselling professional.

2. **Businesses** need to attend to the risk among employees. The Mental Health Index™ measures the mental health risk and status of the working population. The current scores suggest a risk to the longer-term wellbeing of employees, which may impact business productivity, health costs and disability absence. Business would do well to increase the focus on mental health through communication that increases the awareness of mental health warning signs, campaigns to reduce the stigma of seeking mental health support, and the promotion of health plans and public resources.

3. **Governments** need to attend to the mental health of the population. A population under strain is less likely to participate fully in the economy. The current focus on health and safety needs to expand to include a significant focus on mental health. This should include clear messages regarding coping strategies and the promotion of public resources.

The Mental Health Index™ is published monthly, and measures trends over time.

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