

The Mental Health Index by LifeWorks™

Australia | November 2021



Table of contents

<u>1 November 2021 highlights</u>	3	<u>3 Mental Health Index™ (regional)</u>	10	<u>8 Spotlight</u>	18
<u>2 The Mental Health Index™</u>	4	<u>4 Mental Health Index™ (industry)</u>	12	Pandemic effect on working and personal life	18
Mental Health Index™ sub-scores	5			Impact on working life	18
Optimism	6	<u>5 The Mental Stress Change score</u>	13	Impact on personal life	20
General psychological health	7			Use of employer-funded mental health services	21
Financial risk	8	<u>6 Mental Stress Change (percentages)</u>	14	Reasons for not utilizing employer-funded	
Demographics	9	Demographics	15	mental health services	22
Employment	9	Geography	15	Mental wellbeing support	23
Emergency savings	9	Employment	15	Modality	23
				Most valued areas of mental wellbeing support	24
		<u>7 The Mental Stress Change (industry)</u>	17	<u>9 Overview of the Mental Health Index by LifeWorks™</u>	25
				Methodology	25
				Calculations	25
				Additional data and analyses	25

November 2021 highlights

-  While there is high adoption for digital or video support, almost half of working Australians indicate a preference for in-person mental health support.

At more than 12 points below the pre-pandemic benchmark, the mental health of Australians continues to show strain

- The Mental Health Index™ for November 2021 has decreased from October to 12 points below the pre-2020 benchmark.
- Differences in mental health scores between those with and without emergency savings have been reported since the launch of the Index in April 2020. Nearly two years later, individuals without emergency savings have a mental health score (-26.4) more than 14 points below the overall group (-12.2) and nearly 20 points below those with emergency savings (-6.9).

In spite of wider adoption of digital/video mental health support, almost half of Australians want in-person support

- 38% of Australians indicate a preference for in-person support.
- 28% do not have a preference.
- The remaining 24% indicate a preference for video, digital, telephonic or another modality.

Nearly one-quarter of working Australians report that their working life has worsened since the start of the pandemic

- 21% of Australians indicate that their working life has worsened compared to before the pandemic; the mental health of this group is 11 points below the national average.
- Australians working from home are more than twice as likely than those working at the worksite to report an improvement in their working lives compared to before the pandemic.
- 22% of Australians report that their personal life has worsened compared to before the pandemic; the mental health of this group is 14 points below the national average.

Improving sleep is the most valued area of mental wellbeing support for Australians

- 45% of Australians report that improving sleep is the greatest value for their mental health.
- 41% indicate that the most valued area of support is improving mental focus, memory, and problem solving.

45%

want to improve
their sleep

38%

prefer in-person
counselling

41%

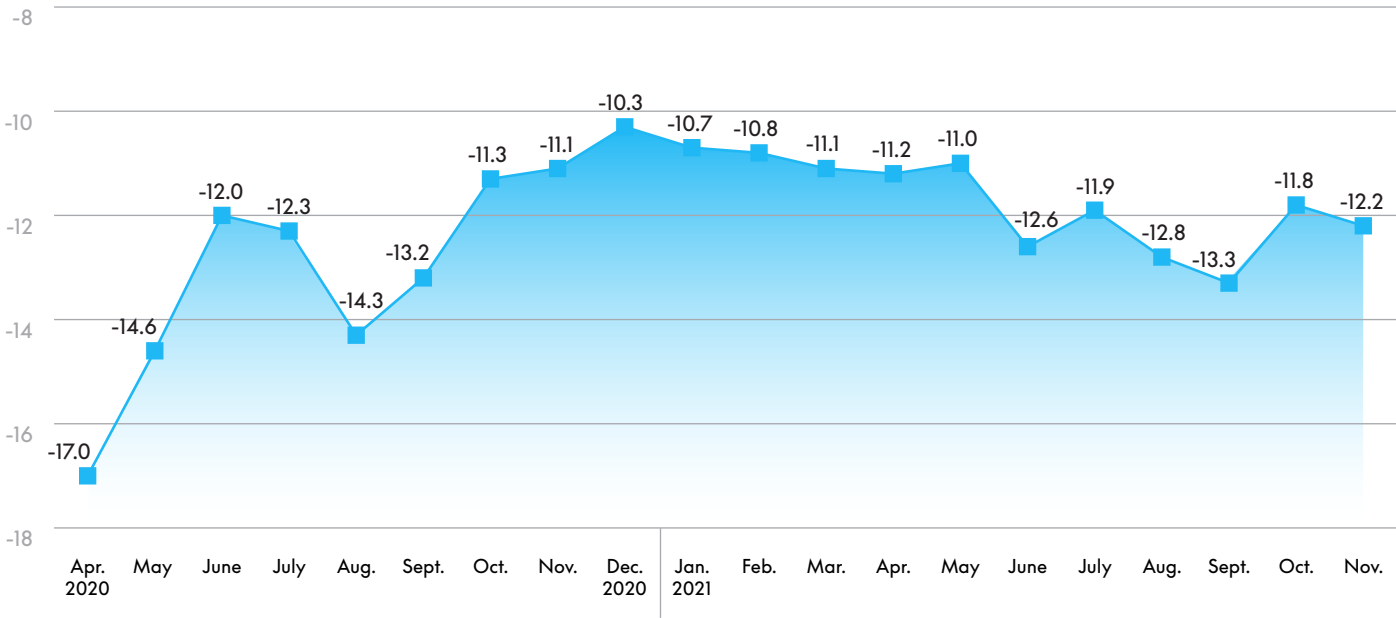
want to improve
their mental focus, memory,
and problem solving

22%

indicate worsening of
their personal life since
the pandemic

The Mental Health Index™

The Mental Health Index™ (MHI) is a measure of deviation from the benchmark¹ of mental health and risk. **The overall Mental Health Index™ for November 2021 is -12.2 points.** A 12-point decrease from the pre-COVID-19 benchmark reflects a population whose mental health is similar to the most distressed one per cent of the benchmark population.



MHI Current Month
November 2021

-12.2

October 2021

-11.8

¹ The benchmark reflects data collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

Mental Health Index™ sub-scores

The lowest Mental Health Index™ sub-score is for the risk measure of anxiety (-13.3), followed by depression (-13.3), isolation (-13.2), work productivity (-12.7), optimism (-11.7), and general psychological health (-6.6). The best sub-score, and the only measure above the historical benchmark continues to be financial risk (2.6).

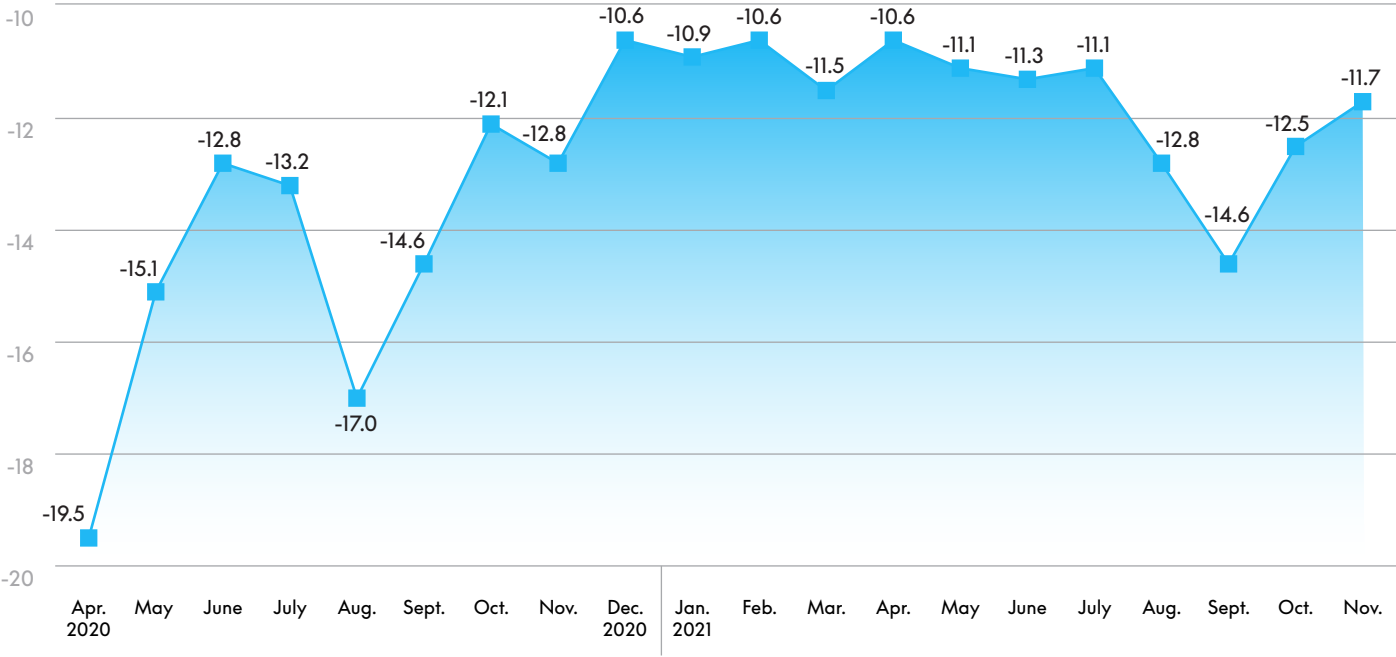
- Work productivity and optimism scores show improvement from October 2021 results.
- With a 1-point increase, the work productivity score has had the greatest improvement from the prior month.
- Despite the 0.8-point decline, the financial risk score continues to be the strongest of all sub-scores and is above the pre-2020 benchmark.

Mental Health Index™ Sub-scores ² 2021	November	October
Anxiety	-13.3	-13.1
Depression	-13.3	-12.9
Isolation	-13.2	-12.0
Work productivity	-12.7	-13.7
Optimism	-11.7	-12.5
Psychological health	-6.6	-6.0
Financial risk	2.6	3.4

2 The demographic breakdown of sub-scores is available upon request.

Optimism

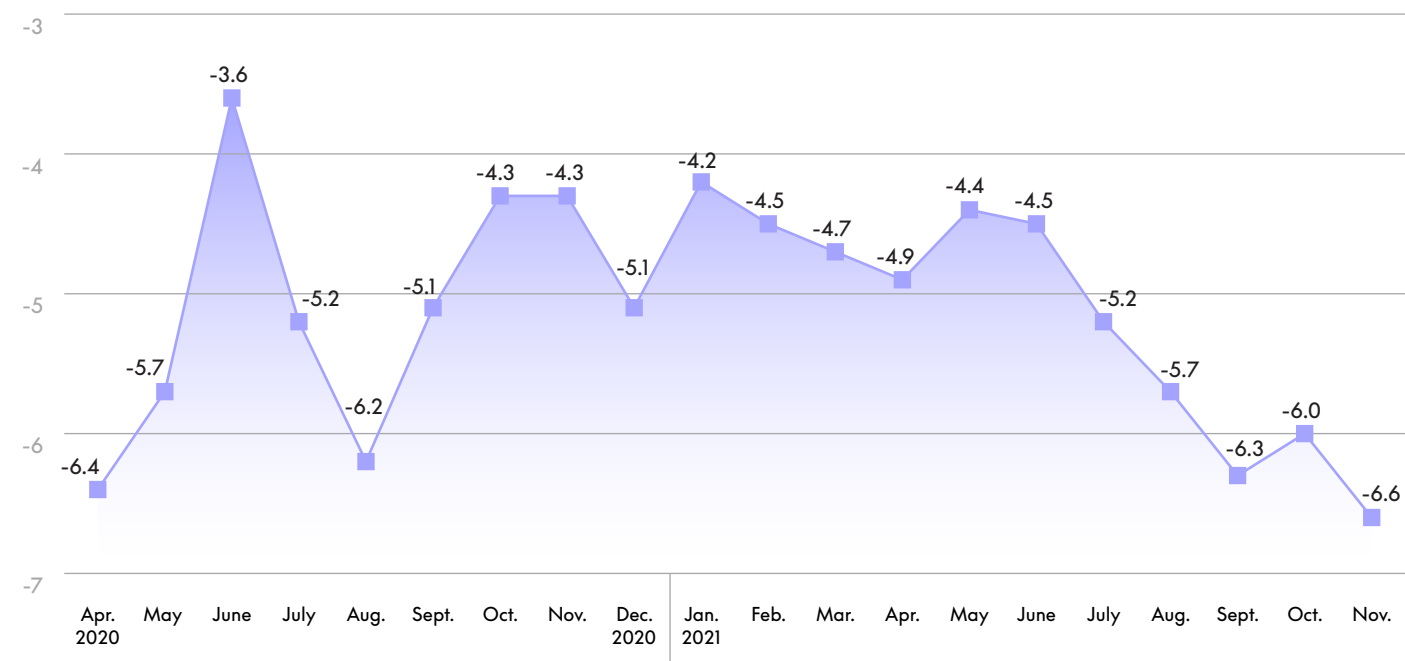
Since April 2020, optimism scores have remained significantly below the benchmark. Since December 2020, scores have fluctuated modestly through July 2021. After two months of significant decline in August and September, the optimism improved by 2.1 points to -12.5 in October. In November 2021, the improvement continues however, the optimism sub-score remains nearly 12 points below the pre-2020 benchmark.



General psychological health

The psychological health measure assesses individuals' self-perception of their overall level of psychological health.

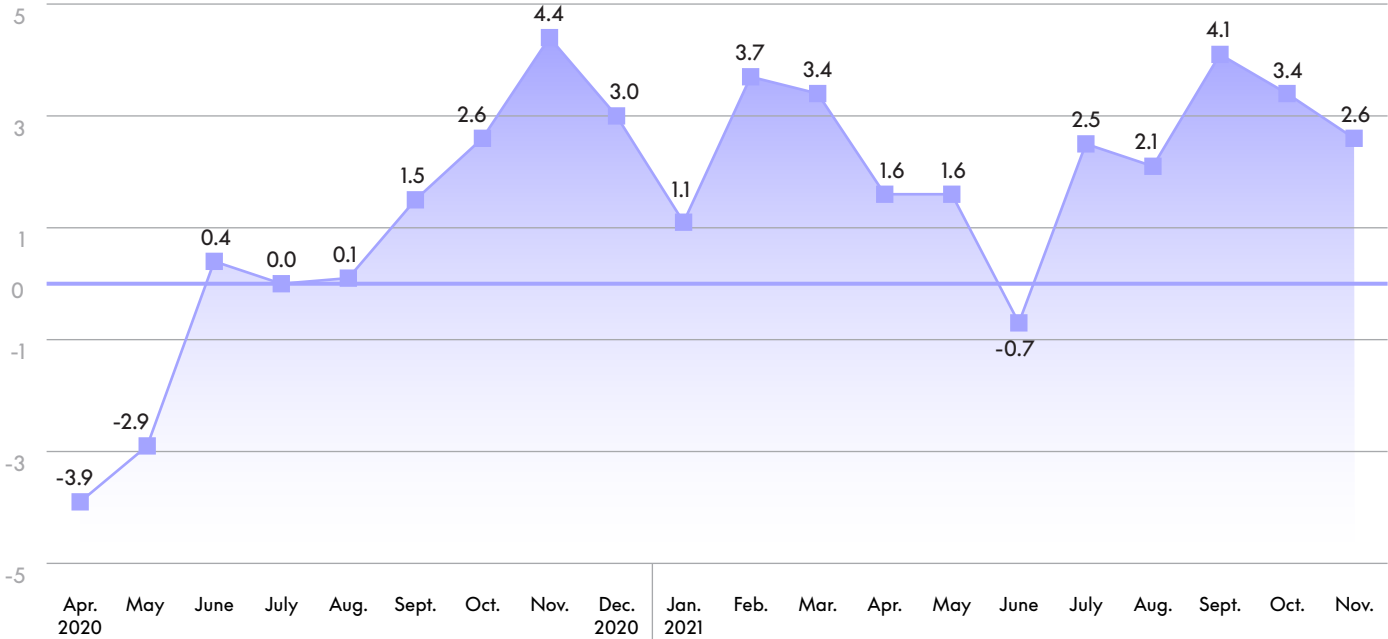
Since the launch of the MHI in April 2020, the general psychological health score fluctuated from a low of -6.4 to a high of -3.6. Since January 2021, scores have fluctuated modestly, however, in July 2021, a sharp decline was observed. After four months of significant decline the general psychological health of Australians improved modestly in October to 6.0 points below the pre-2020 benchmark but has declined in November to -6.6 points.



Financial risk

The financial risk sub-score measures the level of individuals' emergency savings.

From April 2020 to November 2020, the financial risk of Australians showed improvement. The financial risk score declined sharply through January 2021 and recovered in February 2021. Since February, the financial risk scores declined to -0.7, the lowest in more than one year. In July, the financial risk score rebounded to 2.5, but fell modestly to 2.1 in August. In September 2021, a significant 2-point increase was observed reaching a near-high of 4.1 points. For the second consecutive month, the financial risk sub-score has declined to 2.6 in November 2021.



Demographics

- Since the launch of the MHI, women have had significantly lower mental health scores than men. In November 2021, the mental health score of women is -14.6 compared to -8.9 for men.
- In each of the past 20 months, mental health scores improve with age.
- Differences in mental health scores between those with and without children have been reported since the launch of the Index in April 2020. Nearly two years later, this pattern continues with a lower score for those with at least one child (-13.1) compared to those without children (-11.6).

Employment

- Overall, five per cent of respondents are unemployed³ and 13 per cent report reduced hours or reduced salary.
- Individuals reporting reduced salary compared to the prior month have the lowest mental health score (-32.5), followed by those reporting fewer hours (-21.5), and those not currently employed (-19.4).
- Managers have a higher mental health score (-11.2) than non-managers (-12.3).
- Individuals working for organizations with 5,001-10,000 employees have the highest mental health score (-7.6).
- Sole proprietors/self-employed have the lowest mental health score (-18.1).

Emergency savings

- Those without emergency savings continue to experience a lower mental health score (-26.4) than the overall group (-12.2). Individuals with emergency savings have a mental health score of -6.9.

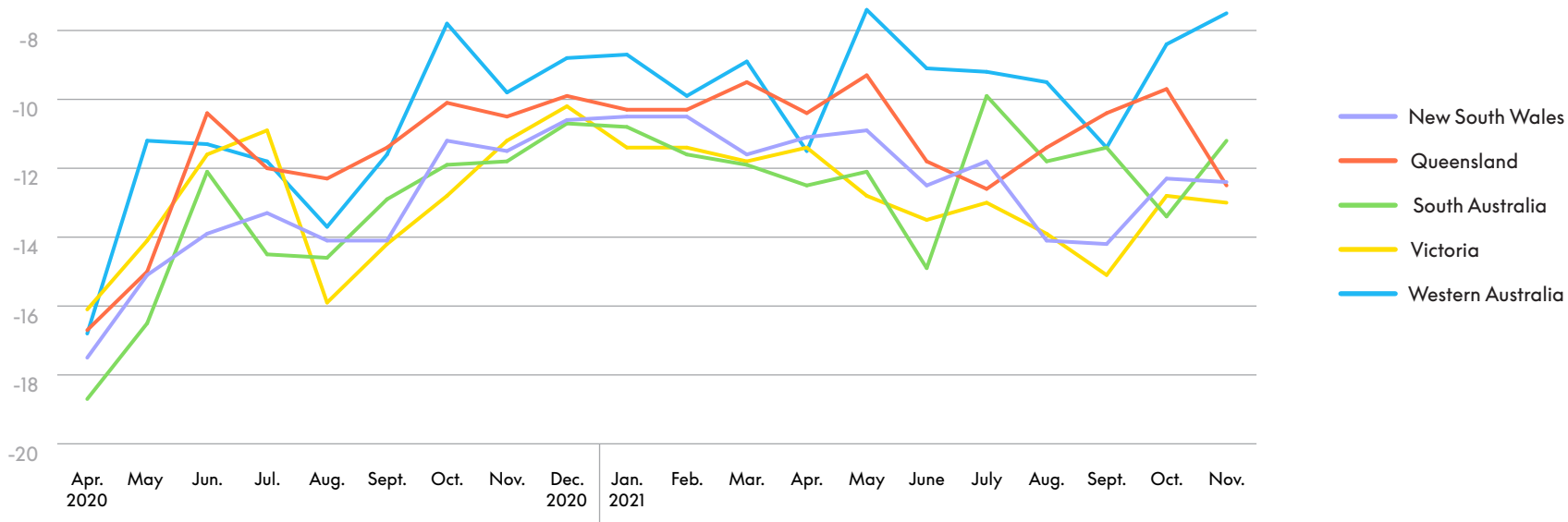
3 MHI respondents who have been employed in the past six months are included in the poll.

Mental Health Index™ (regional)

Regional mental health scores since October 2020 have remained inconsistent except for Western Australia.

In November 2021, the mental health scores in South and Western Australia continue to improve while declines are seen in New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria.

- With a nearly 1-point improvement from October to November, the strongest mental health score is in Western Australia (-7.5).
- The mental health score in Queensland fell -2.8 points in November to a low of -12.5, not seen since July 2021.



Employment status	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	-9.8	-8.4
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	-21.5	-23.7
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	-32.5	-29.4
Not currently employed	-19.4	-20.5
Age group	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Age 20-29	-20.9	-18.3
Age 30-39	-12.4	-15.7
Age 40-49	-15.0	-13.1
Age 50-59	-10.4	-8.5
Age 60-69	-5.2	-5.2
Number of children	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
No children in household	-11.6	-11.0
1 child	-13.6	-12.7
2 children	-13.0	-13.4
3 children or more	-11.1	-13.3

Region	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
New South Wales	-12.4	-12.3
Victoria	-13.0	-12.8
Queensland	-12.5	-9.7
South Australia	-11.2	-13.4
Western Australia	-7.5	-8.4
Gender	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Men	-8.9	-8.1
Women	-14.6	-15.1
Household income	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
\$30K/annum	-27.2	-29.6
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	-16.3	-14.2
\$60k to <\$100K	-14.4	-14.0
\$100K to \$150K	-8.6	-8.7
\$150K and over	-5.2	-5.9

Employer size	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Self-employed/sole proprietor	-18.1	-13.4
2-50 employees	-8.9	-10.6
51-100 employees	-15.2	-15.5
101-500 employees	-12.5	-10.0
501-1,000 employees	-11.0	-12.6
1,001-5,000 employees	-13.3	-12.1
5,001-10,000 employees	-7.6	-6.4
More than 10,000 employees	-11.6	-9.7
Manager	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Manager	-11.2	-11.7
Non-manager	-12.3	-11.2

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

Mental Health Index™ (industry)

Respondents working in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation have the lowest mental health score (-17.3), followed by those in Food Services (-16.6), and Wholesale Trade (-16.5).

Individuals employed in Transportation and Warehousing (-9.2), Public Administration (-9.4), and Manufacturing (-9.5) have the highest mental health scores this month.

Individuals employed in Transportation and Warehousing, Other services (except Public Administration), and Health Care and Social Assistance have seen the greatest improvement in mental health since last month.

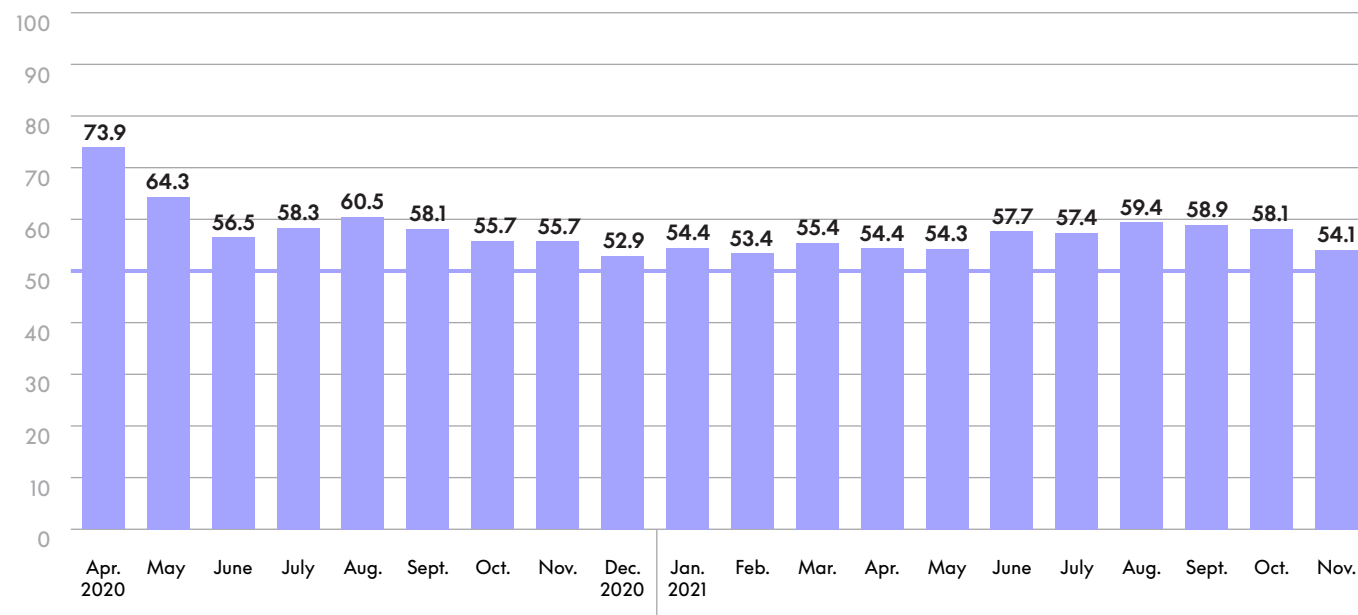
Changes from the prior month are shown in the table.

Industry	November 2021	October 2021	Change
Transportation and Warehousing	-9.2	-12.3	3.2
Other services (except Public Administration)	-12.5	-14.7	2.2
Health Care and Social Assistance	-10.7	-12.2	1.5
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	-17.3	-18.7	1.3
Retail Trade	-15.3	-16.5	1.2
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	-11.8	-10.8	-1.0
Educational Services	-10.5	-9.4	-1.1
Administrative and Support services	-11.8	-10.7	-1.2
Public Administration	-9.4	-8.0	-1.4
Wholesale Trade	-16.5	-14.8	-1.8
Other	-15.5	-13.6	-1.9
Finance and Insurance	-13.9	-11.9	-2.1
Food Services	-16.6	-14.2	-2.4
Manufacturing	-9.5	-7.1	-2.4
Construction	-16.2	-13.4	-2.8

The Mental Stress Change score

The Mental Stress Change score (MStressChg) is a measure of the level of reported mental stress compared to the prior month. **The Mental Stress Change score for November 2021 is 54.1.** This reflects a net increase in mental stress compared to the prior month.

The current score indicates that 19 per cent of the population is experiencing more mental stress compared to the prior month, with 11 per cent experiencing less. A continued increase in mental stress since April 2020 indicates a significant accumulation of strain in the Australian population.



- ▲ More mental stress
- 50 = No change from prior month
- ▼ Less mental stress

MStressChg
Current Month—
November 2021

54.1

MStressChg
October 2021

58.1

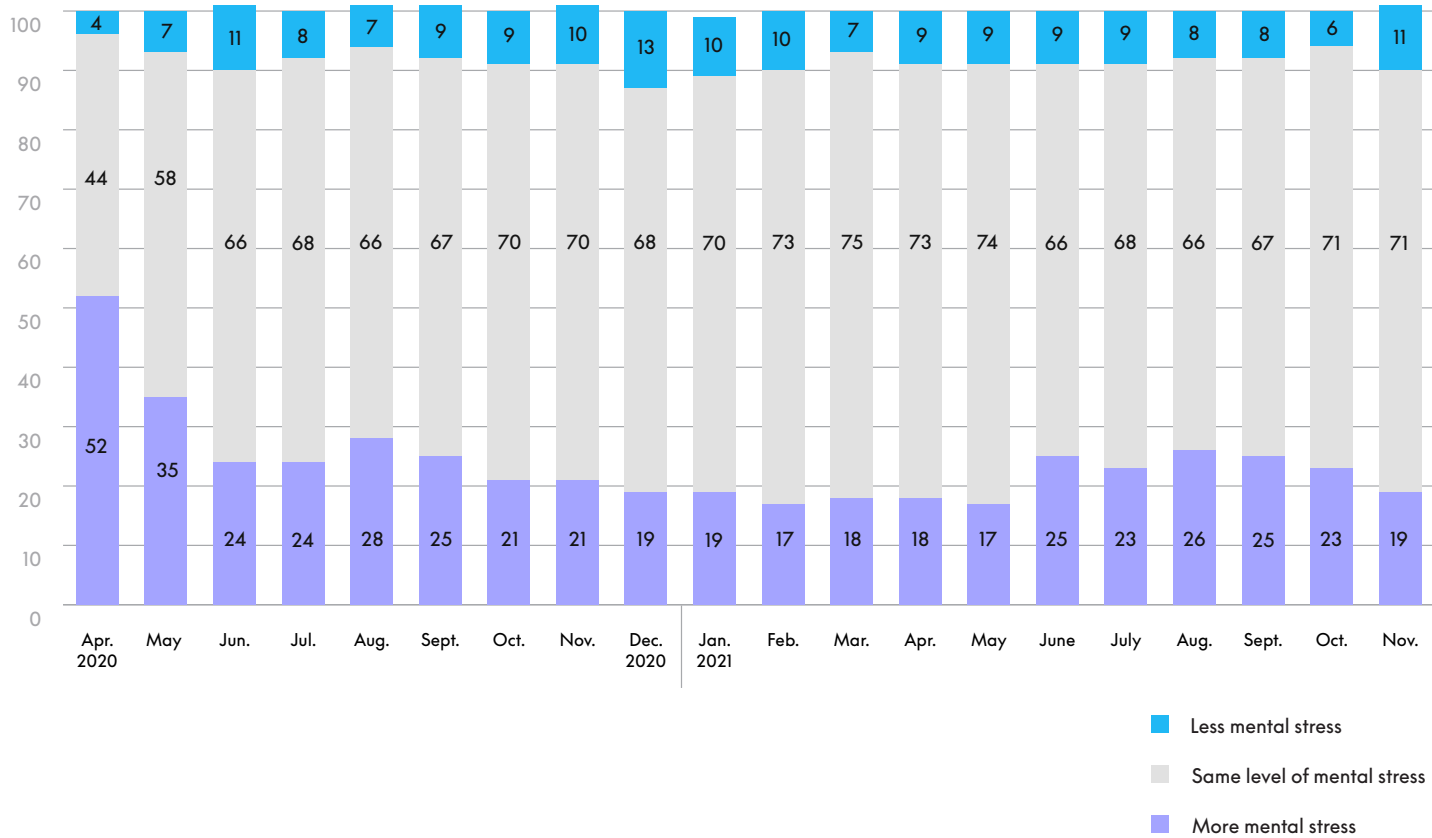
Mental Stress Change (percentages)

Mental Stress Change tracks stress changes each month. The percentages of those experiencing more stress, the same level of stress, and less stress for each month of the survey are shown in the graph.

For more than one year, the percentage of those experiencing more mental stress than the previous month has steadily decreased; however, the data showing this decline is too insignificant to lower the overall Mental Stress Change score to below 50 (the level at which stress is lower than the previous month). As the proportion of individuals reporting the same level of stress or more stress than the previous month continues to outweigh the proportion reporting less mental stress, the population will continue to feel the effects of significantly increased stress and will not be able to reach a more sustainable and healthy level of stress.

In April 2020, 52 per cent of individuals reported an increase in mental stress. The number of respondents reporting increased month-over-month mental stress is 19 per cent in November 2021, while 71 per cent of respondents report the same level of mental stress and 11 per cent report a decrease in mental stress.

Mental Stress Change by month



Demographics

- Since the launch of the MHI in April 2020, younger people have experienced a greater increase in mental stress month over month compared to older respondents.
- In November 2021, the mental stress change score for women is 53.9 compared to 54.2 for men.

Geography

- The greatest increase in month-over-month stress is for respondents living in Victoria (54.4), followed by New South Wales (54.3), Queensland (53.6), Western Australia (53.4), and South Australia (53.4).

Employment

- The greatest increase in mental stress is seen in employed people with reduced salary (61.4), followed by employed people with reduced hours (61.3), unemployed people (59.0), and employed people with no change to salary or hours (52.6).
- Managers (55.1) have a greater increase in stress than non-managers (53.1) have near equal increases in mental stress.

Employment status	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	52.6	56.5
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	61.3	65.9
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	61.4	64.1
Not currently employed	59.0	59.6
Age group	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Age 20-29	59.5	62.8
Age 30-39	54.8	61.2
Age 40-49	56.0	58.2
Age 50-59	51.5	55.2
Age 60-69	49.7	55.1
Number of children	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
No children in household	52.5	57.0
1 child	56.9	61.5
2 children	55.5	56.5
3 children or more	57.8	62.5

Region	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
New South Wales	54.3	59.8
Victoria	54.4	59.4
Queensland	53.6	53.4
South Australia	53.4	57.8
Western Australia	53.4	56.7
Gender	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Men	54.2	54.4
Women	53.9	61.4
Household income	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
\$30K/annum	63.8	59.1
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	55.8	59.1
\$60k to <\$100K	53.3	59.5
\$100K to \$150K	53.6	56.0
\$150K and over	51.9	57.1

Employer size	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Self-employed/sole proprietor	58.0	58.9
2-50 employees	51.0	58.6
51-100 employees	58.3	62.0
101-500 employees	52.5	54.8
501-1,000 employees	51.6	57.6
1,001-5,000 employees	54.9	60.8
5,001-10,000 employees	54.9	54.2
More than 10,000 employees	54.5	56.8
Manager	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Manager	55.1	58.9
Non-manager	53.1	57.4

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

The Mental Stress Change (industry)

In November 2021, individuals employed in Transportation and Warehousing (50.0) report no increase in mental stress than the prior month. A score of 50 means that the proportion of the population experiencing more stress is balanced by the proportion experiencing less stress. A score below 50 indicates that the group is experiencing less stress than the prior month.

Individuals employed in Food Services have the most significant increase in mental stress (59.6) followed by those employed in Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (59.0).

Mental Stress changes from the last two months are shown in the table.

Industry	November 2021	October 2021
Transportation and Warehousing	50.0	54.8
Educational Services	50.5	54.3
Manufacturing	50.7	57.5
Administrative and Support services	50.8	54.5
Retail Trade	52.8	61.0
Wholesale Trade	53.0	64.3
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	53.6	56.8
Finance and Insurance	54.4	59.2
Public Administration	54.7	57.4
Construction	55.0	64.1
Health Care and Social Assistance	55.6	61.1
Other services (except Public Administration)	55.9	61.5
Other	56.7	54.2
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	59.0	57.6
Food Services	59.6	63.0

Spotlight

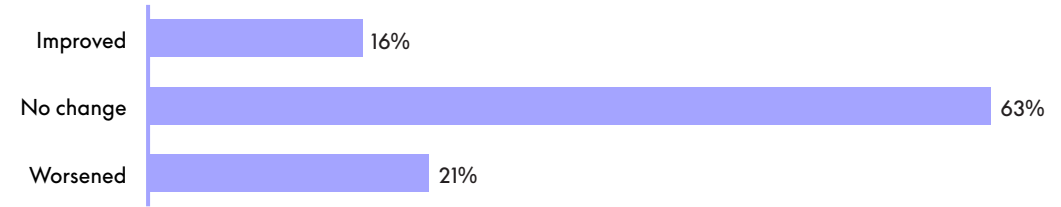
Pandemic effect on working and personal life

Impact on working life

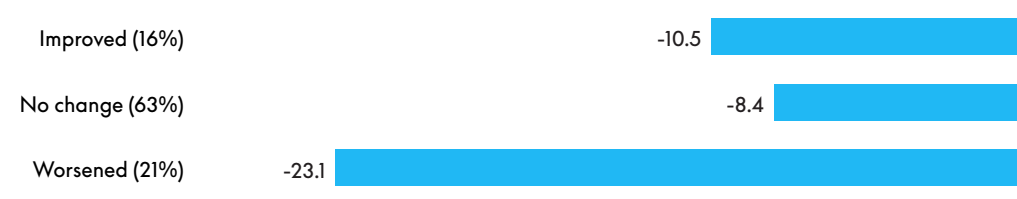
Respondents were asked how they would describe their working life now compared to before the pandemic.

- Nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) report no change in their working life compared to before the pandemic and this group has the most favourable mental health score (-8.4).
- More than one-in-five people (21 per cent) indicate that their working life has worsened compared to before the pandemic and this group has the least favourable mental health score (-23.1), 11 points below the overall Australian average (-12.2).

How has your working life changed compared to before the pandemic?

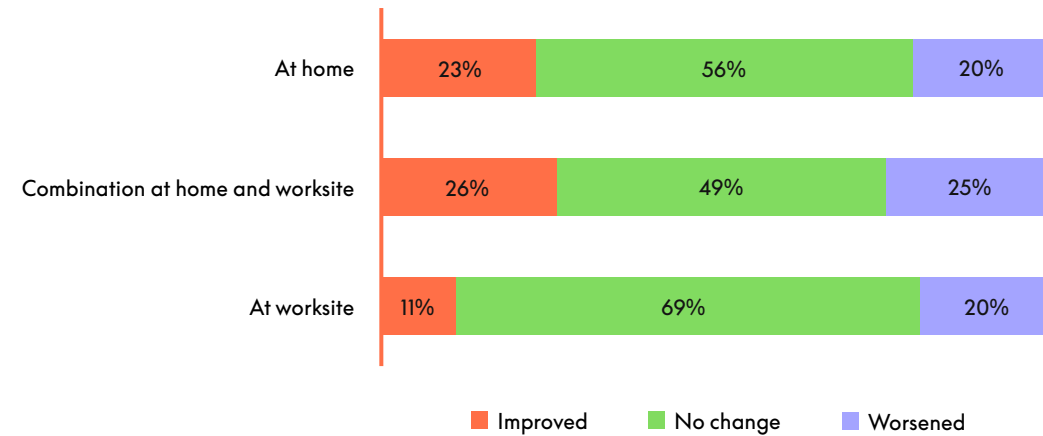


MHI score by how your working life has changed compared to before the pandemic



- Individuals working from home are more than twice as likely as individuals working at the worksite to report an improvement in their working lives compared to before the pandemic.
- Individuals splitting their time between home and the worksite are two and a half times more likely to report an improvement in their working lives than individuals working exclusively at the worksite.
- Individuals reporting reduced salary or fewer hours are more than twice as likely as individuals with no change to hours or salary to report that their working life has worsened compared to before the pandemic.

Change in working life compared to before the pandemic (work location)

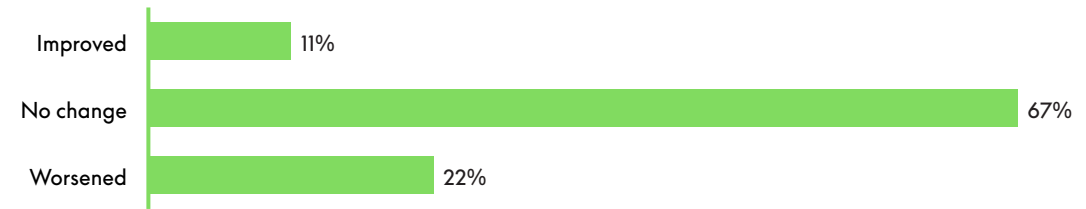


Impact on personal life

In November 2021, respondents were asked how they would describe their personal life now compared to before the pandemic.

- Two-thirds (67 per cent) report no change in their personal life when compared to before the pandemic and this group has the most favourable mental health score (-8.0).
- Nearly one-quarter (22 per cent) indicate that their personal life has worsened compared to before the pandemic and this group has the least favourable mental health score (-26.4), 14 points below the overall Australian average (-12.2).
- Individuals reporting reduced salary or fewer hours are 60 per cent more likely than individuals with no change to hours or salary to report that their personal life has worsened compared to before the pandemic.

How has your personal life changed compared to **before the pandemic**?



MHI score by how your personal life has changed compared to before the pandemic

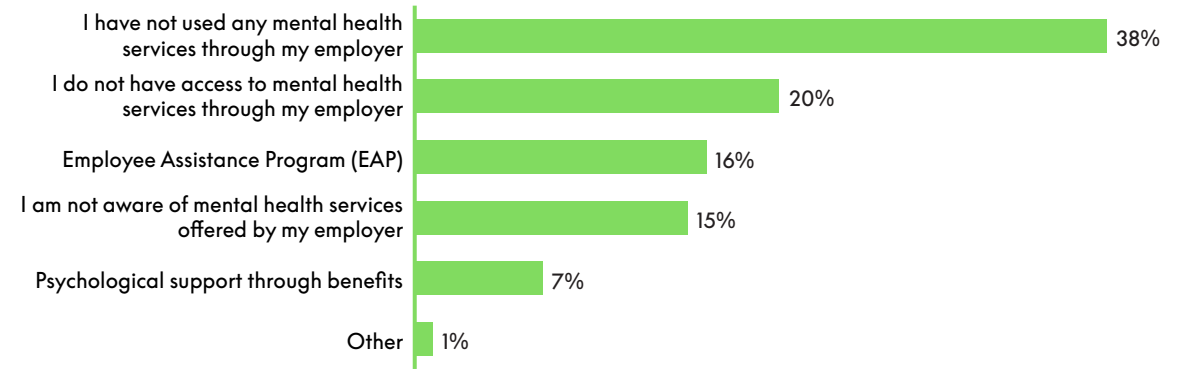


Use of employer-funded mental health services

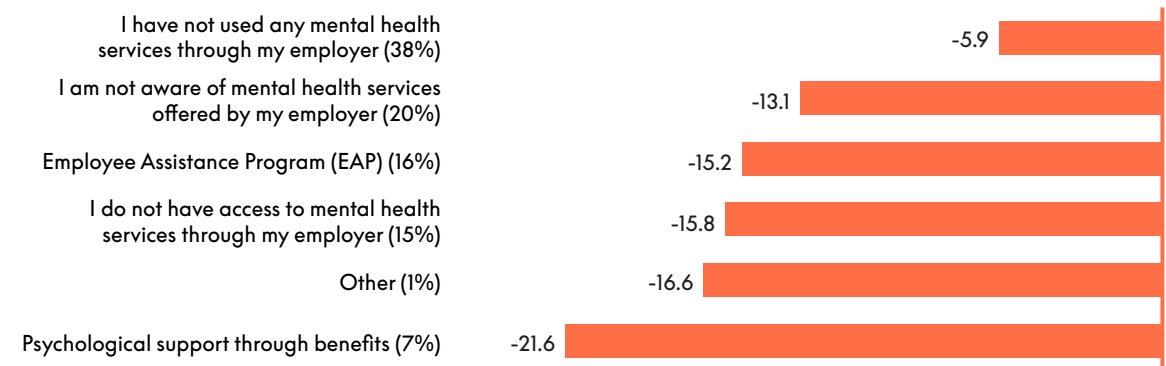
Respondents were asked whether they have used any employer-funded mental health services.

- More than one-third (38 per cent) report not using any mental health services through their employer and this group has the most favourable mental health score (-5.9).
- Seven per cent report using psychological support through benefits and this group has the least favourable mental health score (-21.6).
- Parents are three times more likely than non-parents to use psychological support through their benefits plan.
- Managers are three times more likely than non-managers to use psychological support through their benefits plan.

Use of employer-funded mental health services



MHI score by use of employer-funded mental health services

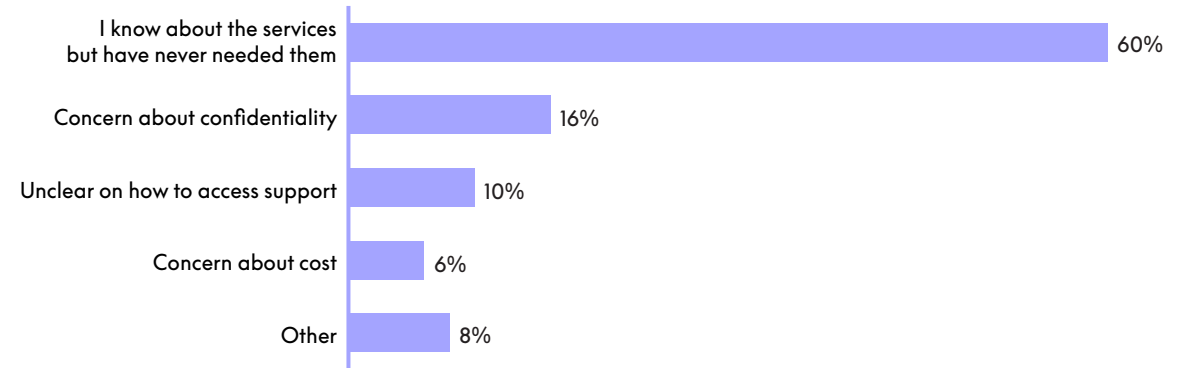


Reasons for not utilizing employer-funded mental health services

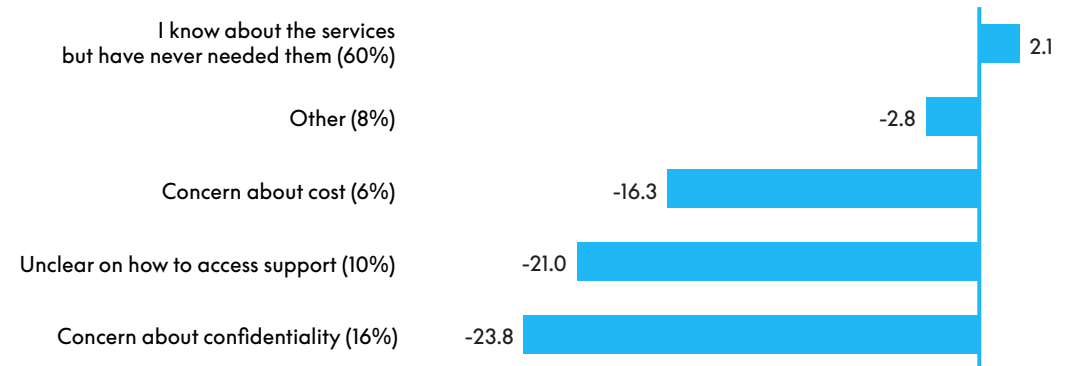
Respondents who have not used mental health services through their employer were asked why they have not used services.

- Nearly two-thirds (60 per cent) report that they are aware of the services, but have never needed them, and this group has the most favourable mental health score (2.1).
- Sixteen per cent have concerns about confidentiality and 10 per cent indicate that they are unclear on how to access support as reasons for not using mental health services through their employer.

Reason for not using employer-funded mental health services



MHI score by reason for not using employer-funded mental health services



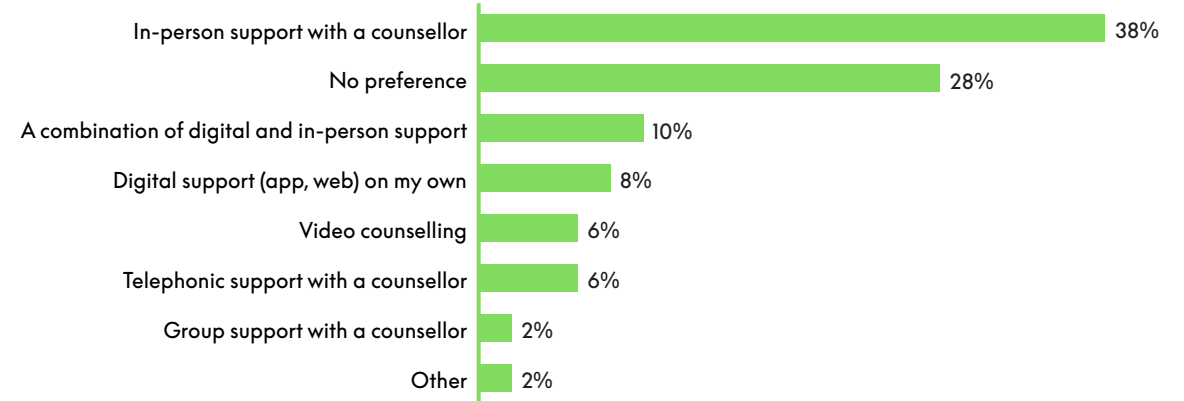
Mental wellbeing support

Modality

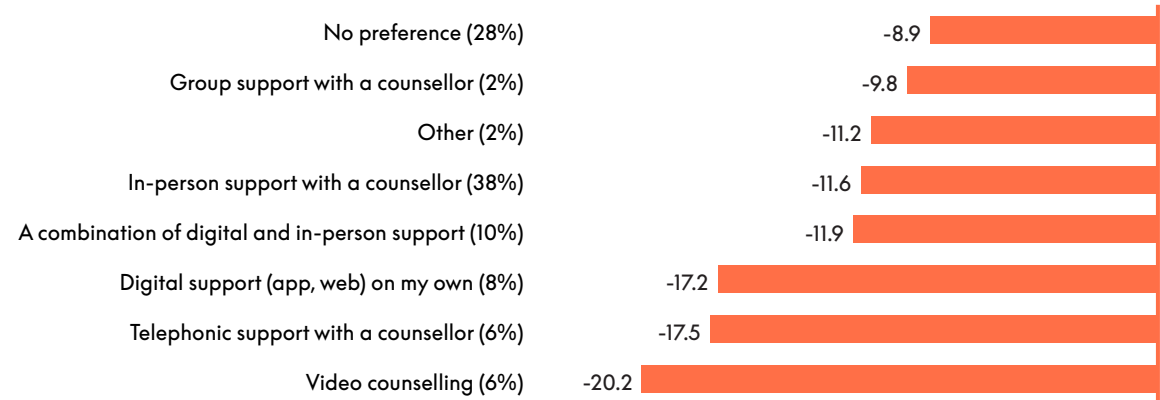
Respondents were asked about their preferred modality of mental wellbeing support.

- More than one-third (38 per cent) report in-person support with a counsellor as their preferred modality for support.
- More than one-quarter (28 per cent) report having no preference and this group has the most favourable mental health score (-8.9).
- Parents are two and a half times more likely than non-parents to select video counselling as their preferred modality for support.

Preferred modality for support



MHI score by preferred modality for support

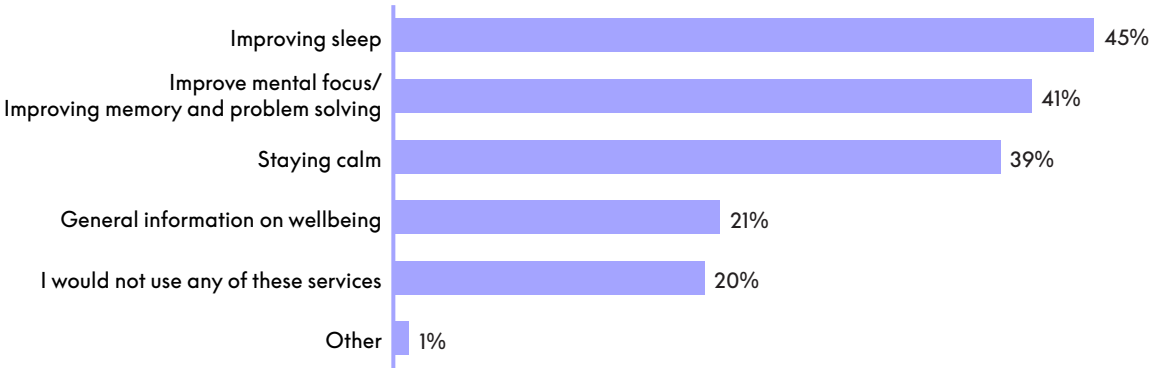


Most valued areas of mental wellbeing support

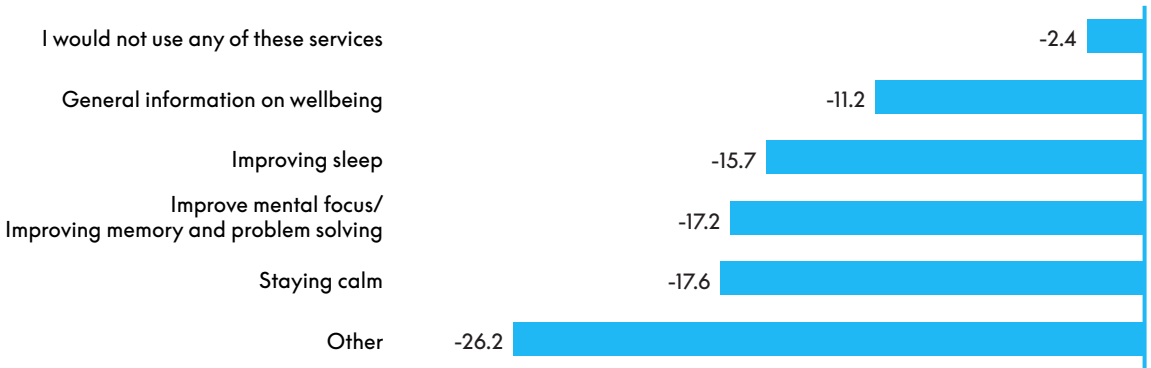
Respondents were asked about the areas that they would value mental health support.

- Nearly half (45 per cent) report that improving sleep is the most valued area of mental wellbeing.
- Improving mental focus, improving memory, and problem solving would be valued by 41 per cent of respondents.

Mental wellbeing areas where support is most valued



MHI score by mental wellbeing areas where support is most valued



Overview of the Mental Health Index by LifeWorks™

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 each geography compared to benchmarks collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The increases and decreases in the MHI are intended to predict cost and productivity risks and inform the need for investment in mental health support by business and government.

The Mental Health Index™ report has three 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

Data for this report is collected through an online survey of 1,000 people who live in Australia and are currently employed or who were employed within the prior six months. Participants are selected to be representative of the age, gender, industry, and geographic distribution in Australia. The same respondents

take part each month to remove a sampling bias. Respondents are asked to consider the prior two weeks when answering each question. The Mental Health Index™ has been published monthly since April 2020. Benchmark data was collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Data for the current report was collected between November 9 and 22, 2021.

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. Everyone's scores are added and then divided by a 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 comprises data from 2017, 2018 and 2019. This was a period of relative social stability and steady economic growth. **The change compared 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 score reflects a comparison of 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.

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@lifeworks.com



About LifeWorks

LifeWorks is a world leader in providing digital and in-person solutions that support the total wellbeing of individuals. We deliver a personalized continuum of care that helps our clients improve the lives of their people and by doing so, improve their business.

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