

# The Mental Health Index by LifeWorks™

Canada | November 2021



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# November 2021 highlights

-  One in four working Canadians indicate that their personal and work lives have worsened since the pandemic.

## At 10 points below the pre-pandemic benchmark, the mental health of Canadians continues to show strain

- The Mental Health Index™ for November 2021 has increased modestly from October but remains 10 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 (-31.5) more than 20 points below the overall group (-10.0) and more than 30 points below those with emergency savings (-0.2).
- With more than a 6-point decline from October, full-time post-secondary students continue to have the lowest mental health score (-25.6) by a significant margin.

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

- 37% of Canadians indicate a preference for in-person support.
- 25% do not have a preference.
- The remaining 26% indicate a preference for video, digital, telephonic or another modality.

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

- 23% of Canadians 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.
- Canadians working from home are three times more likely than those working at the worksite to report an improvement in their working lives compared to before the pandemic.
- 24% of Canadians report that their personal life has worsened compared to before the pandemic; the mental health of this group is 12 points below the national average.

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

- 44% of Canadians report that improving sleep is the greatest value for their mental health.
- 40% indicate that the most valued area of support is improving mental focus, memory and problem solving.

44%

want to improve  
their sleep

37%

prefer in-person  
counselling

40%

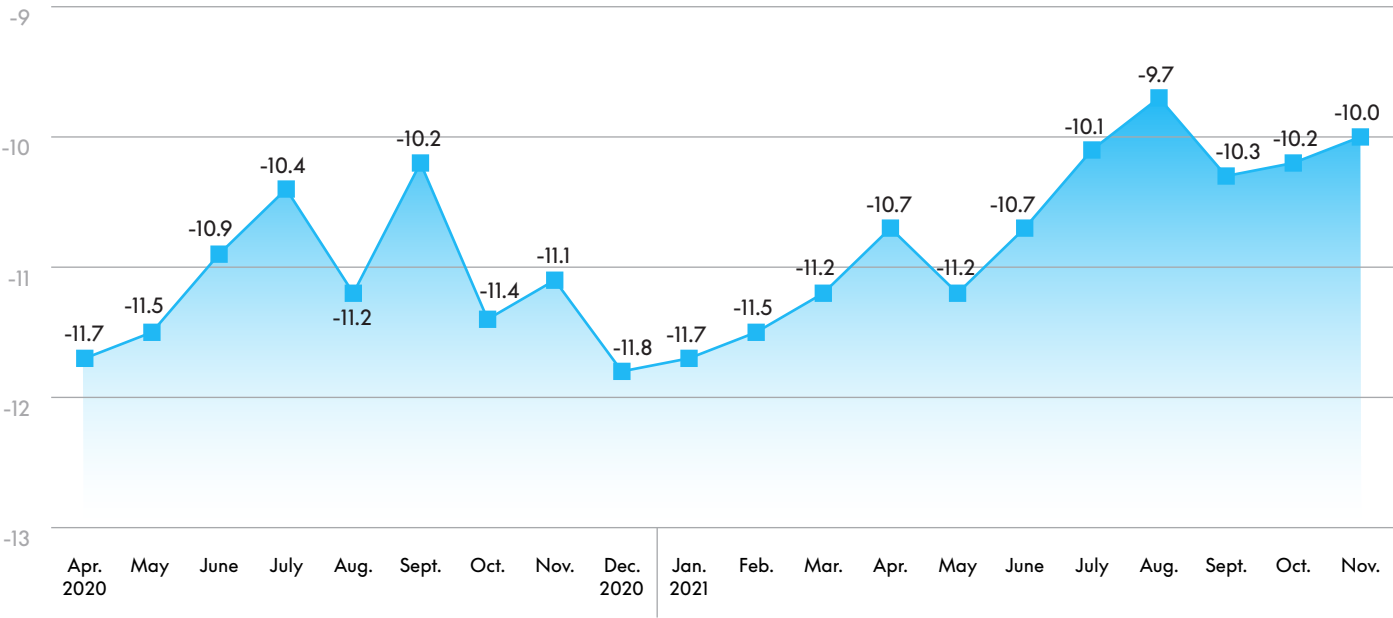
want to improve  
their mental focus, memory,  
and problem solving

24%

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 benchmark<sup>1</sup> of mental health and risk. **The overall Mental Health Index™ for November 2021 is -10.0 points.** A 10-point decrease from the pre-COVID-19 benchmark reflects a population whose mental health is similar to the most distressed four per cent of the benchmark population.



MHI Current Month  
November 2021

-10.0

October 2021

-10.2

<sup>1</sup> 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 depression (-12.0), followed by anxiety (-10.8), work productivity (-10.7), isolation (-10.5), optimism (-10.2), and general psychological health (-3.2). The best sub-score, and the only measure above the historical benchmark continues to be financial risk (3.9).

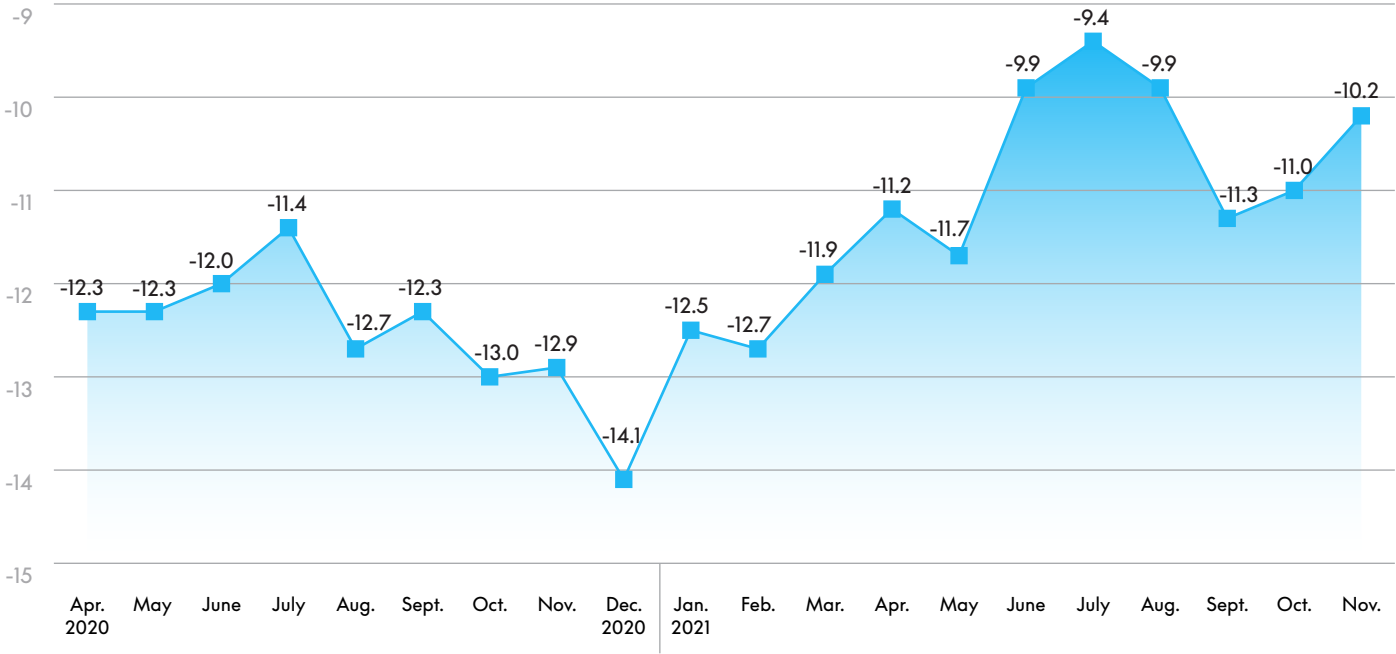
- Depression, work productivity, and financial risk sub-scores have declined compared to October 2021.
- With a 0.9-point improvement, the isolation sub-score has shown the greatest improvement from the prior month.
- Despite 1.3-point decline from October 2021, financial risk continues to be the strongest of all sub-scores and is above the pre-2020 benchmark.

Mental Health Index™ Sub-scores <sup>2</sup> 2021	November	October
Depression	-12.0	-11.7
Anxiety	-10.8	-11.1
Work productivity	-10.7	-10.2
Isolation	-10.5	-11.4
Optimism	-10.2	-11.0
Psychological health	-3.2	-3.5
Financial risk	3.9	5.2

<sup>2</sup> The demographic breakdown of sub-scores is available upon request.

# Optimism

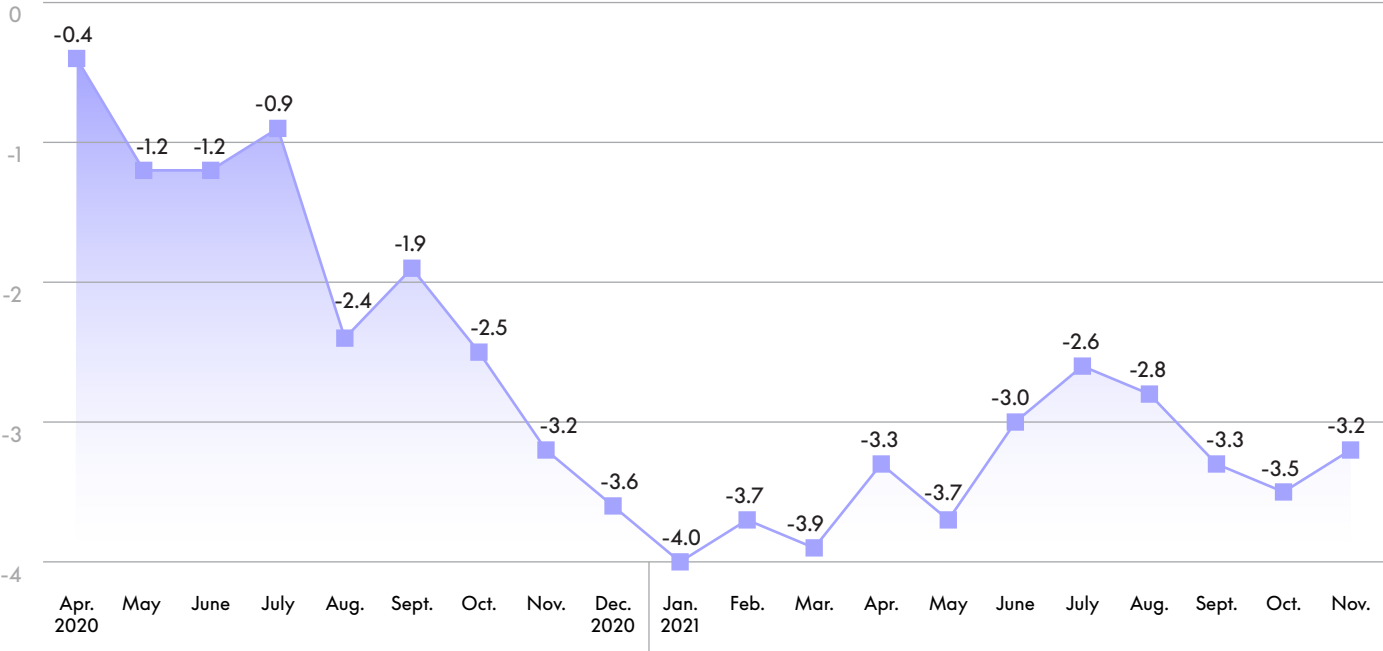
Since April 2020, optimism sub-scores have remained significantly below the benchmark. Despite some months of modest improvement, including a peak in July 2020, there was a general decline to a low point in December 2020 (-14.1). Since December, the optimism sub-score has improved, reaching a high of -9.4 in July 2021. Following two months of declines in August and September, the optimism sub-score continues to improve in November to -10.2.



# General psychological health

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

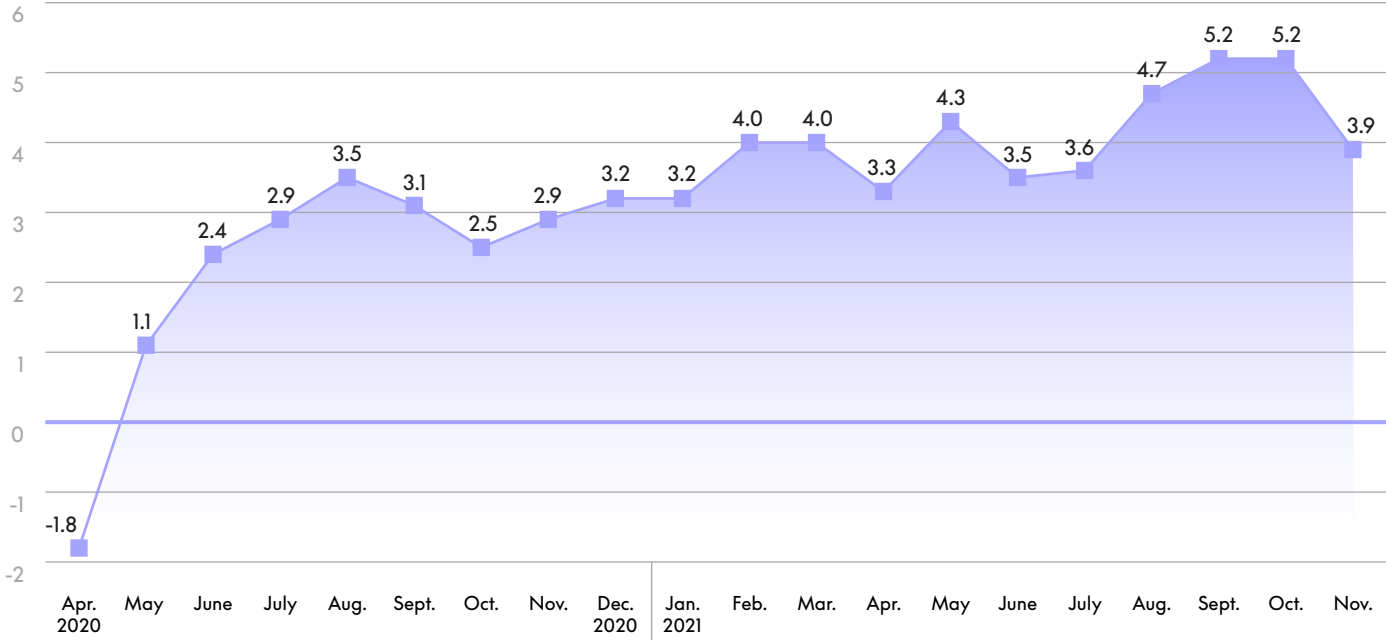
From launch of the MHI in April 2020 to January 2021, the general psychological health of Canadians declined to a low of four points below the pre-2020 benchmark. Since January 2021, sub-scores have fluctuated modestly. After three months of decline from August through October 2021, the psychological health score in November has improved slightly to -3.2.



# Financial risk

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

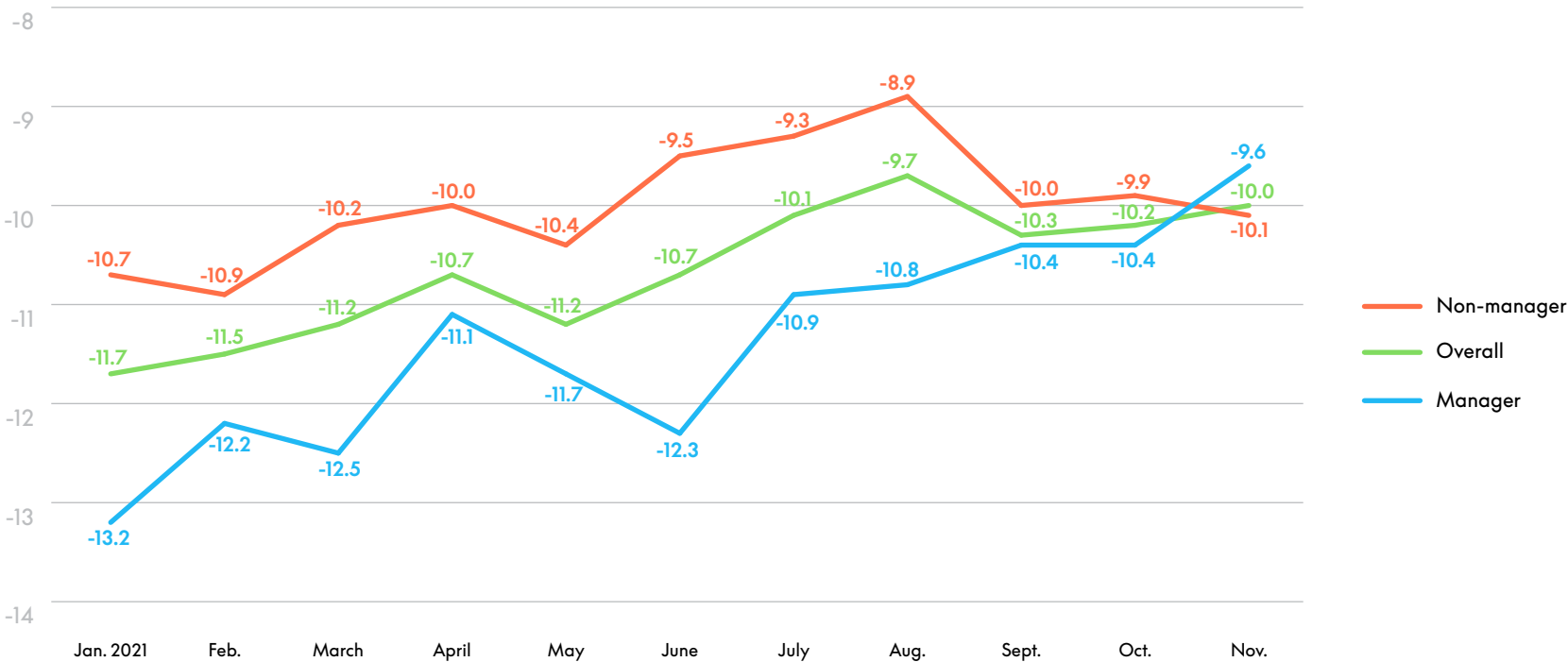
The financial risk sub-score has shown general improvement since the launch of the MHI in April 2020. In November 2021, the financial risk sub-score of Canadians fell 1.3 points from the prior month. Despite this decline, at nearly four points above the pre-2020 benchmark, financial risk continues to be the strongest of all mental health sub-scores.





## Managers compared to non-managers

Since January 2021, the mental health scores of managers have been lower than non-managers and lower than the overall Canadian average. Non-managers have consistently higher mental health scores than the overall Canadian population. In September and October 2021, the difference in scores between managers and non-managers narrowed to within a half-point. In November, the mental health score of managers (-9.6) has improved to a level above non-managers (-10.1) and the overall Canadian average (-10.0).



## 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 -12.3 compared to -7.8 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 (-11.5) compared to those without children (-9.4).

## Employment

- Overall, four per cent of respondents are unemployed<sup>3</sup> and 10 per cent report reduced hours or reduced salary.
- Individuals reporting working fewer hours compared to the prior month have the lowest mental health score (-21.4), followed by those reporting reduced salary (-20.1), and those not currently employed (-13.0).
- In a reversal of the trend since January 2021, managers have a slightly higher mental health score (-9.6) than non-managers (-10.1).
- Individuals working for organizations with 5,001-10,000 employees have the highest mental health score (-8.1).
- Respondents working for companies with 51-100 employees have the lowest mental health score (-13.5).

## Emergency savings

- Those without emergency savings continue to experience a lower mental health score (-31.5) than the overall group (-10.0). Individuals with emergency savings have a mental health score of -0.2.

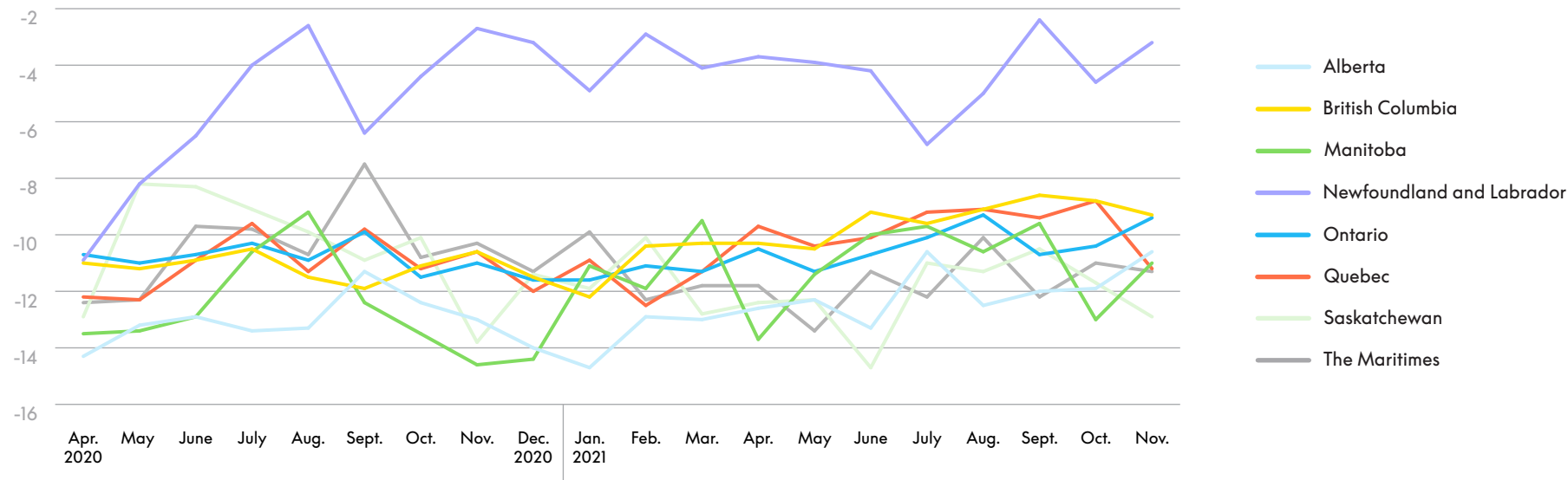
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3 MHI respondents who have been employed in the past six months are included in the poll.

# Mental Health Index™ (provincial)

Since April 2020, provincial mental health scores have fluctuated. Except for Newfoundland and Labrador, the fluctuation patterns for the provinces were similar through July 2021. In November 2021 there is a significant difference between Saskatchewan's score of -12.9 and Newfoundland and Labrador's score of -3.2.

- With a 1.4-point improvement over the prior month, the mental health score in Newfoundland and Labrador continues to be the most favourable mental health score (-3.2).
- Quebec saw the greatest decline in mental health with a 2.4-point decrease from October to November to 11 points below the pre-2020 benchmark.
- The most improved mental health score in October is in Manitoba (-11.0) with a 2-point improvement over October 2021.



Employment status	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	-8.6	-8.7
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	-21.4	-20.2
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	-20.1	-23.9
Not currently employed	-13.0	-14.1
Age group	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Age 20-29	-20.2	-21.3
Age 30-39	-14.8	-15.6
Age 40-49	-12.3	-11.8
Age 50-59	-7.7	-7.5
Age 60-69	-3.2	-3.6
Number of children	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
No children in household	-9.4	-9.5
1 child	-11.5	-12.8
2 children	-11.5	-10.6
3 children or more	-11.3	-9.7

Province	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Alberta	-10.6	-11.9
British Columbia	-9.3	-8.8
Manitoba	-11.0	-13.0
Newfoundland and Labrador	-3.2	-4.6
The Maritimes	-11.3	-11.0
Quebec	-11.2	-8.8
Ontario	-9.4	-10.4
Saskatchewan	-12.9	-11.7
Gender	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Men	-7.8	-8.0
Women	-12.3	-12.5
Household income	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
<\$30K/annum	-17.4	-19.2
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	-14.8	-14.7
\$60K to <\$100K	-11.0	-10.9
\$100K to <\$150K	-7.3	-7.0
\$150K or more	-2.4	-3.3

Employer size	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Self-employed/sole proprietor	-8.2	-6.3
2-50 employees	-9.6	-10.0
51-100 employees	-13.5	-12.4
101-500 employees	-10.4	-11.6
501-1,000 employees	-11.7	-11.9
1,001-5,000 employees	-9.2	-10.5
5,001-10,000 employees	-8.1	-9.6
More than 10,000 employees	-9.1	-8.9
Manager	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Manager	-9.6	-10.4
Non-manager	-10.1	-9.9

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)

With more than a six-point decline in November, full-time post-secondary students have the lowest mental health score (-25.6). This score is significantly lower than the next lowest scores: individuals employed in Wholesale Trade (-13.4) and Finance and Insurance (-11.7).

Individuals employed in Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction (-7.0), Information and Cultural Industries (-7.3), and in the Automotive Industry (-7.8) have the highest mental health scores this month.

Individuals employed in Accommodation and Food Services, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting and Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction have seen the greatest improvement in mental health since last month.

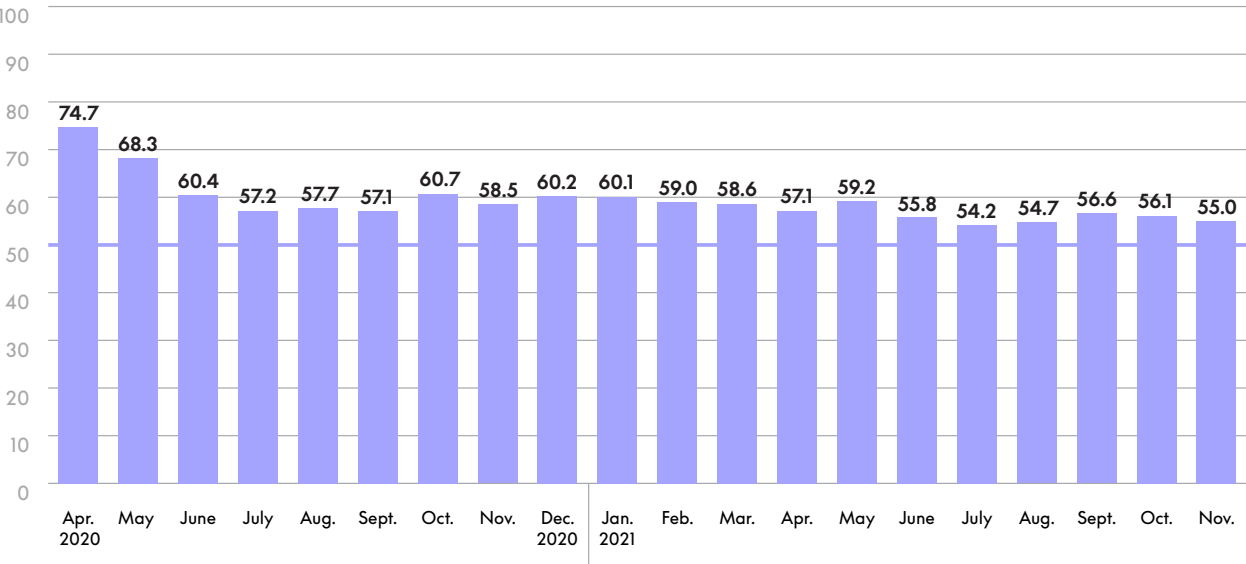
Changes from the prior month are shown in the table.

Industry	November 2021	October 2021	Change
Accommodation and Food Services	-9.8	-15.3	5.5
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	-8.5	-12.5	4.0
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	-7.0	-10.6	3.6
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	-11.1	-14.6	3.5
Utilities	-9.1	-12.6	3.5
Information and Cultural Industries	-7.3	-10.1	2.8
Manufacturing	-8.3	-10.5	2.3
Transportation and Warehousing	-8.1	-9.7	1.7
Public Administration	-10.7	-11.5	0.8
Finance and Insurance	-11.7	-12.4	0.6
Educational Services	-9.1	-9.4	0.4
Retail Trade	-8.8	-8.7	-0.1
Automotive Industry	-7.8	-7.4	-0.3
Health Care and Social Assistance	-11.1	-10.7	-0.4
Other services (except Public Administration)	-11.0	-10.4	-0.6
Construction	-9.7	-8.9	-0.8
Other	-11.6	-10.5	-1.1
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	-8.3	-6.8	-1.5
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	-11.7	-8.8	-2.9
Wholesale Trade	-13.4	-7.2	-6.1
Full-time student	-25.6	-19.3	-6.3

# 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 55.0.** This reflects a net increase in mental stress compared to the prior month.

The current score indicates that 18 per cent of the population is experiencing more mental stress compared to the prior month, with eight per cent experiencing less. A continued increase in mental stress since April 2020 indicates a significant accumulation of strain in the Canadian population.



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

MStressChg  
Current Month—  
November 2021

55.0

MStressChg  
October 2021

56.1

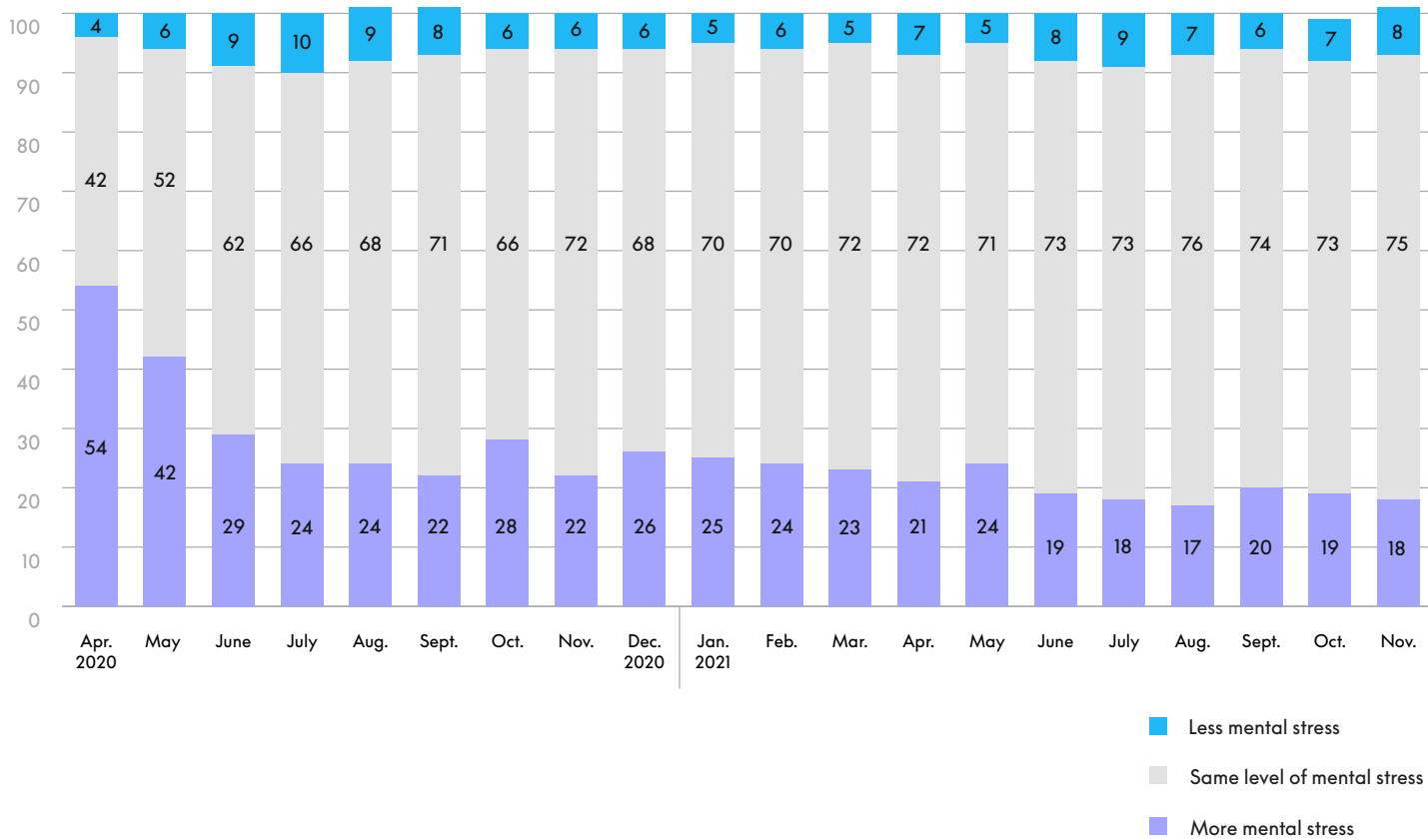
# Mental Stress Change (percentages)

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, 54 per cent of individuals reported an increase in mental stress. The number of respondents reporting increased month-over-month mental stress is 18 per cent in November 2021, while 75 per cent of respondents report the same level of mental stress and eight 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.
- Since April 2020, women have had larger increases in mental stress compared to men. In November 2021, the mental stress change score for women is 56.6 compared to 53.5 for men.

## Geography

- The greatest increase in month-over-month stress is for respondents living in Saskatchewan (58.4), followed by Alberta (56.7), and Ontario (56.1).
- Respondents living in the provinces where the increase in mental stress was less, still had significant increases, including the Maritimes (54.5), Manitoba (54.2), followed by British Columbia (53.8), and Quebec (51.6).
- The only province with a net decrease in mental stress is Newfoundland and Labrador (48.0).

## Employment

- The greatest increase in mental stress is seen in employed people with reduced salary (67.9), followed by employed people with reduced hours (63.1), employed people with no change to salary or hours (54.1), and unemployed people (51.8).
- Managers (55.0) and non-managers (55.1) have near equal increases in mental stress.



Employment status	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	54.1	55.2
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	63.1	64.0
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	67.9	68.5
Not currently employed	51.8	53.4

Age group	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Age 20-29	57.5	62.0
Age 30-39	58.7	58.8
Age 40-49	56.1	57.3
Age 50-59	53.8	54.7
Age 60-69	51.4	52.9

Number of children	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
No children in household	53.9	55.5
1 child	58.4	57.5
2 children	55.8	57.3
3 children or more	58.1	58.1

Province	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Alberta	56.7	58.8
British Columbia	53.8	55.5
Manitoba	54.2	54.9
Newfoundland and Labrador	48.0	53.8
The Maritimes	54.5	56.6
Quebec	51.6	54.0
Ontario	56.1	56.2
Saskatchewan	58.4	56.8

Gender	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Men	53.5	54.0
Women	56.6	58.1

Household income	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
<\$30K/annum	55.3	58.4
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	56.4	56.2
\$60K to <\$100K	54.8	55.5
\$100K to <\$150K	55.4	56.4
\$150K or more	52.6	55.3

Employer size	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Self-employed/sole proprietor	55.5	54.6
2-50 employees	53.6	55.4
51-100 employees	53.7	54.6
101-500 employees	54.9	56.0
501-1,000 employees	55.9	58.8
1,001-5,000 employees	55.6	57.4
5,001-10,000 employees	57.1	57.4
More than 10,000 employees	56.0	56.4

Manager	Nov. 2021	Oct. 2021
Manager	55.0	57.2
Non-manager	55.1	55.4

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 compared to 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 working in Public Administration have the most significant increase in mental stress (58.6), followed by individuals employed in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (57.6), and Health Care and Social Assistance (57.4).

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

Industry	November 2021	October 2021
Transportation and Warehousing	50.0	53.6
Other services (except Public Administration)	51.7	53.6
Other	52.0	55.7
Automotive Industry	52.9	53.5
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	53.0	56.9
Retail Trade	53.4	53.2
Construction	53.9	55.4
Full-time student	54.0	60.0
Manufacturing	54.0	56.7
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	54.5	57.1
Utilities	55.3	57.6
Accommodation and Food Services	55.3	53.1
Educational Services	56.0	57.3
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	56.4	54.1
Wholesale Trade	56.4	54.5
Information and Cultural Industries	56.4	57.4
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	56.5	54.2
Finance and Insurance	56.8	58.7
Health Care and Social Assistance	57.4	57.4
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	57.6	64.1
Public Administration	58.6	57.3

# Spotlight

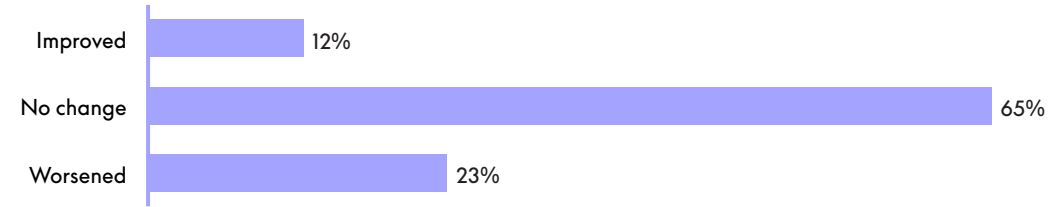
## Pandemic effect on working and personal life

### Impact on working life

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

- Nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) report no change in their working life compared to before the pandemic and this group has the most favourable mental health score (-6.2).
- Nearly one-quarter (23 per cent) indicate that their working life has worsened compared to before the pandemic and this group has the least favourable mental health score (-21.1), more than 11 points below the overall Canadian average (-10.0).

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

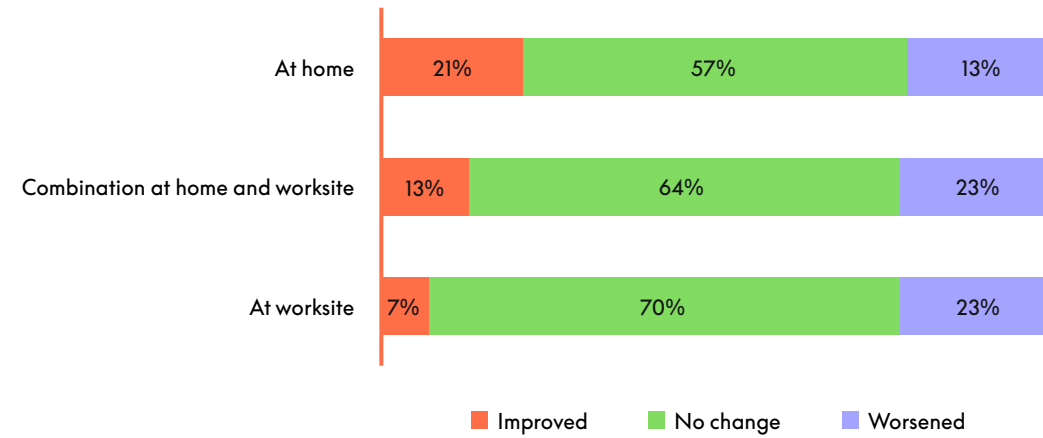


**MHI score by how your working life has changed compared to before the pandemic**



- Individuals working from home are three times more likely than 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 nearly twice as 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.
- Individuals without emergency funds are twice as likely as individuals with emergency funds to report that their working life has worsened compared to before the pandemic.

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

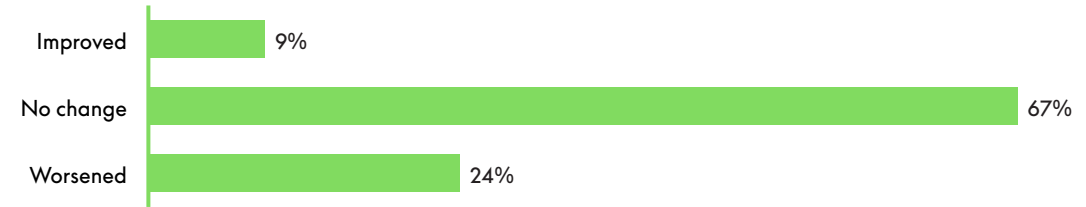


## Impact on personal life

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 (-6.1).
- Nearly one-quarter (24 per cent) indicate that their personal life has worsened compared to before the pandemic and this group has the least favourable mental health score (-22.0), 12 points below the overall Canadian average (-10.0).
- Individuals reporting reduced salary or hours are twice as likely as individuals with no change to hours or salary to report that their personal life has worsened compared to before the pandemic.
- Respondents under 40 are twice as likely as respondents over 50 to report an improvement in their personal lives 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

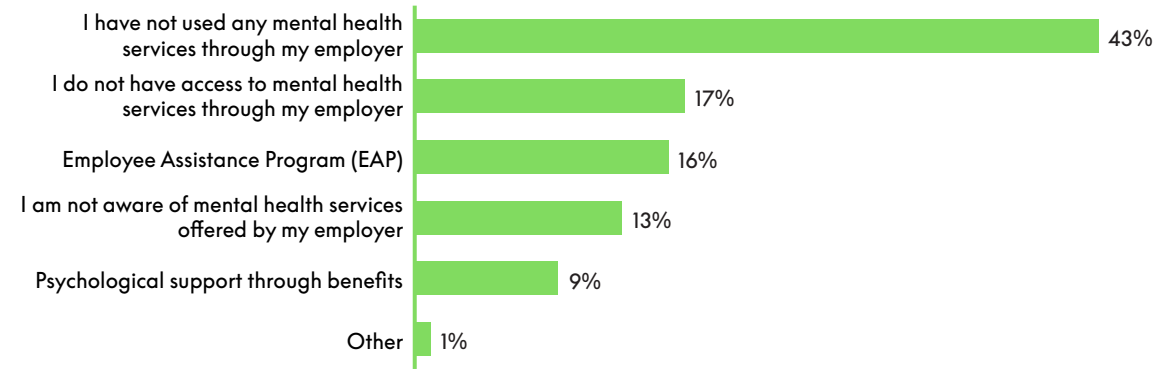


## Use of employer-funded mental health services

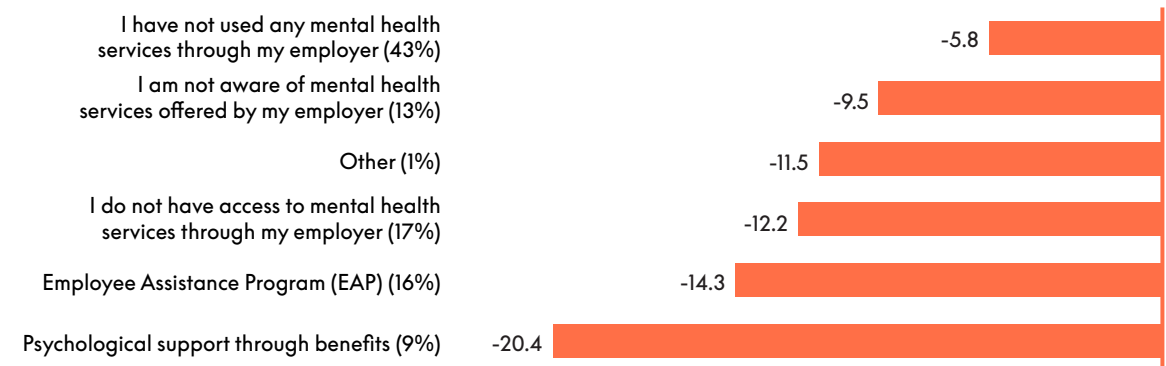
Respondents were asked whether they have used any employer-funded mental health services.

- Forty-three per cent report not using any mental health services through their employer and this group has the most favourable mental health score (-5.8).
- Nearly one in ten (9 per cent) report using psychological support through benefits and this group has the least favourable mental health score (-20.4).
- Parents are 60 per cent more likely than non-parents to use an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Managers are twice as likely as 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

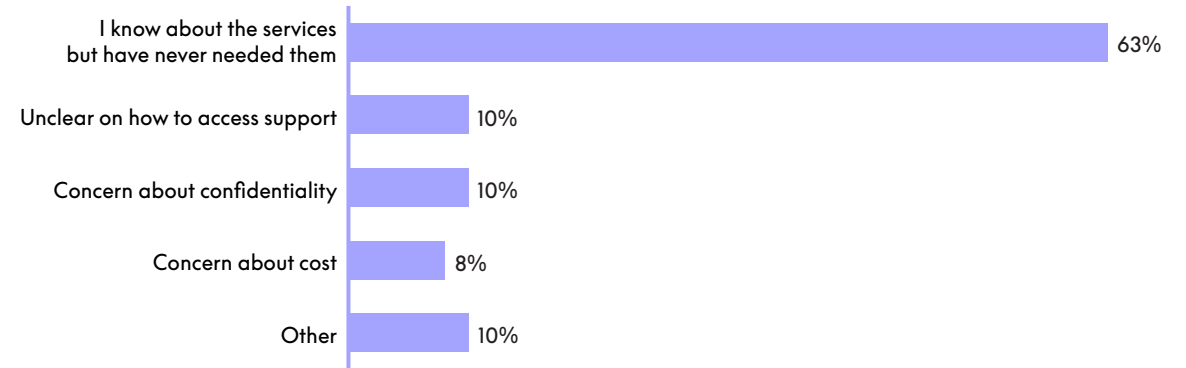


## Reasons for not utilizing employer-funded mental health services

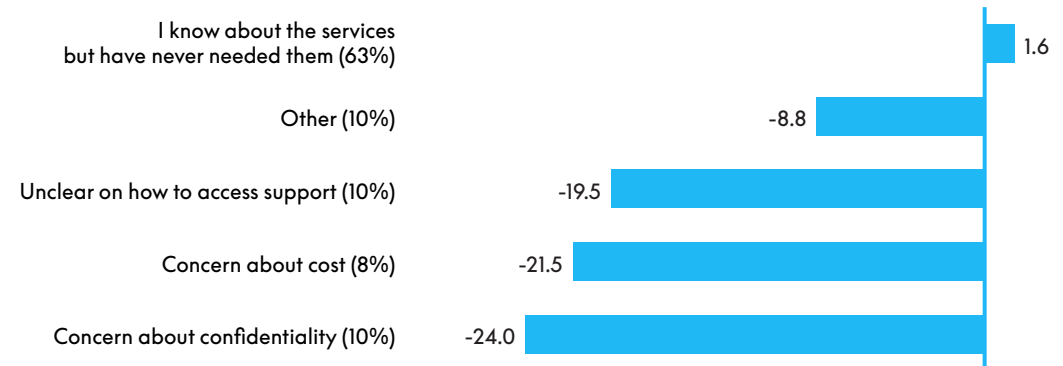
Respondents who have not used mental health services through their employer were asked why they have not used services.

- Nearly two-thirds (63 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 (1.6).
- Ten per cent indicate that they are unclear on how to access support and a further 10 per cent have concerns about confidentiality 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



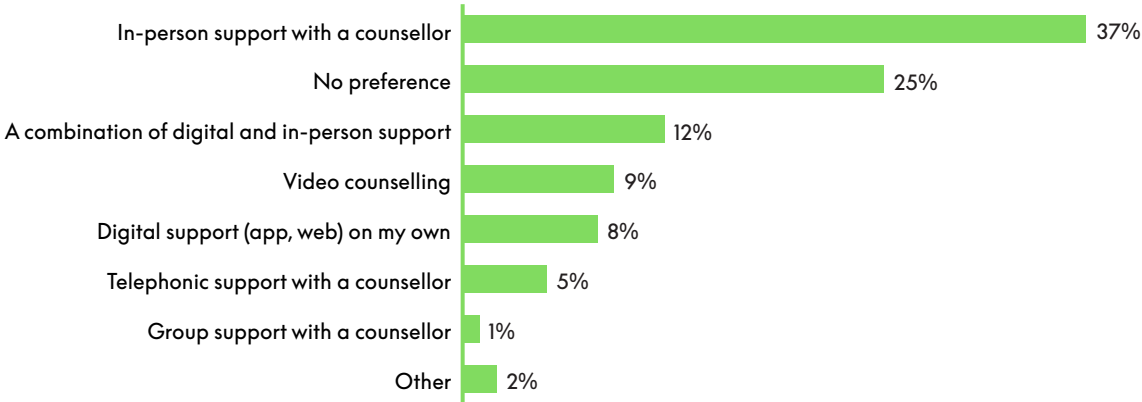
# Mental wellbeing support

## Modality

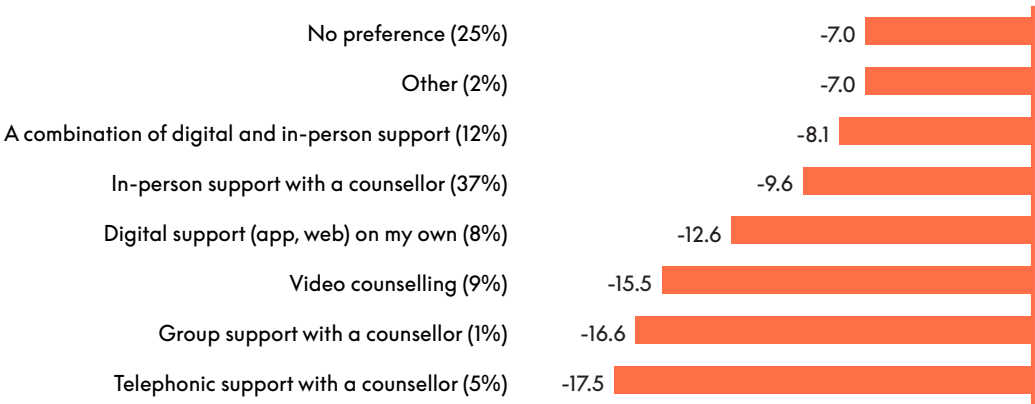
Respondents were asked about their preferred modality of mental wellbeing support.

- More than one-third (37 per cent) report in-person support with a counsellor as their preferred modality for support.
- One-quarter (25 per cent) report having no preference and this group has the most favourable mental health score (-7.0).
- Parents are 70 per cent 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



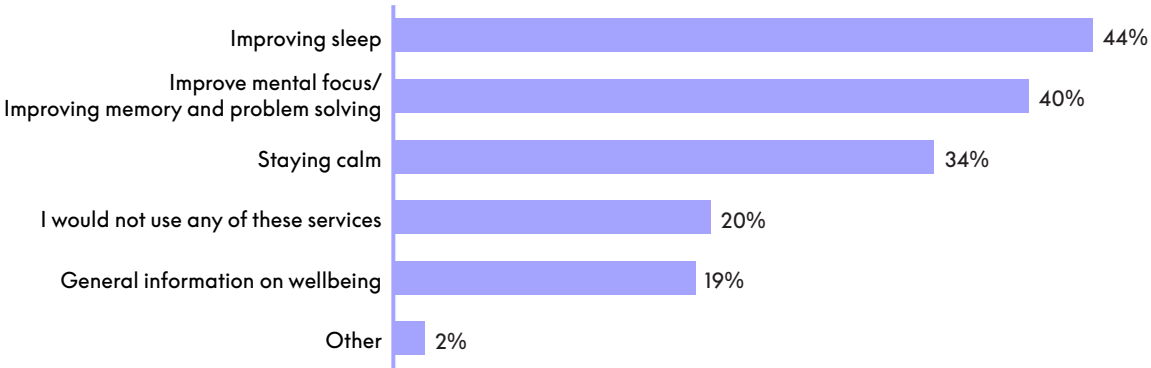


## Most valued areas of mental wellbeing support

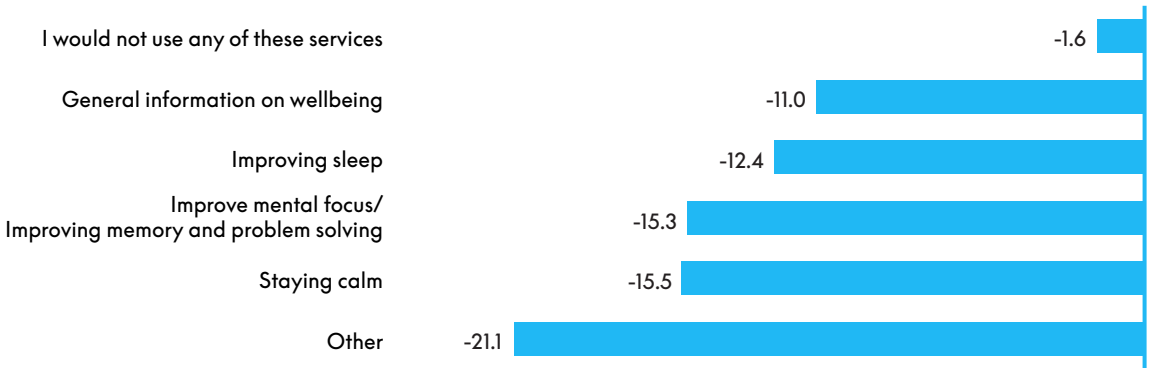
Respondents were asked about the areas that they would value mental wellbeing support.

- More than forty per cent (44 per cent) report that improving sleep is the most valued area of mental wellbeing.
- Individuals without emergency savings are nearly twice as likely as individuals with emergency savings to indicate that support to stay calm is most valued.

## 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 3,000 people who live in Canada 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 Canada. 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](mailto: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.

For more information, visit:

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