

# The Mental Health Index™ report

Australia, February 2021



**LifeWorks**  
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## February highlights

**The mental health of Australians continues to show significant strain when compared to prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. With reports of multiple highly contagious variants of the virus, the threat of a third wave has emerged. February marks 11 consecutive months of diminished mental health when compared to the pre-pandemic benchmark. The level of mental health in February indicates that the working population is currently as distressed as the most distressed three per cent of working Australians, prior to 2020.**

In February, only ten per cent of individuals report experiencing less stress than they had in the month before. The majority (73 per cent) indicate the same level of stress when compared to the prior month, however, given the escalation in stress each month since the pandemic, this reflects an elevated level of cumulative stress for this group as well. This strain will likely continue until a sufficient proportion of the Australian population is vaccinated.

Financial risk is up modestly from the prior month. **In February, the financial risk score of Australians is 7.6 points better than at the start of the Index™**, in April 2020. Further, depression (-12.2), general psychological health (-4.5), and anxiety (-12.7) scores have all declined since January.

Regional mental health scores have generally increased since August 2020. In February, the lowest mental health score is observed in South Australia (-11.6), a 0.8-point decline from January. Despite a 1.2-point decline from the prior month, the mental health score in Western Australia remains strongest (-9.9).

**For the second consecutive month, full-time students have the lowest mental health score (-27.6) and also the most significant increase in mental stress (63.5).**

**Individuals reporting reduced salary or reduced hours continue to have comparable or lower mental health scores compared to those who are unemployed. As well, those reporting reduced salary or reduced hours report a greater increase in mental stress compared to unemployed people.**

Despite the increasing incidence of mental health issues due to the prolonged impact of the pandemic among people of all ages, backgrounds and socio-economic status, stigma is an issue.

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

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**Forty per cent of respondents report that they would feel more negatively about themselves if they had a mental health issue;** this group has the lowest mental health score (-18.9) and the lowest work productivity score (-21.6). Approximately half of respondents aged 20-39 report that they would feel more negatively about themselves if they had a mental health issue, suggesting that self-stigma is an issue.

**More than half (52 per cent) of respondents believe that their career options would be limited if their employer were aware that they had a mental health issue;** this group has both the lowest mental health score (-16.2) and the lowest work productivity score (-18.6).

**More than forty per cent (41 per cent) of respondents report that they would be concerned that friends would treat them differently if they had a mental health issue;** this group has both the lowest mental health score (-17.8) and the lowest work productivity score (-20.5).

**People leaders are struggling. The Mental Health Index™ score for managers (-10.4) is slightly lower than for non-managers (-10.1); similarly, managers report a greater increase in mental stress than non-managers.** Forty-six per cent of managers, compared to thirty-eight per cent of non-managers, would feel more negatively about themselves if they had a mental health issue.

**Nearly sixty per cent (58 per cent) of managers believe that their career options would be limited if their employer knew that they had a mental health issue** and more than half (52 per cent) believe that their friends would treat them differently if they had a mental health issue.

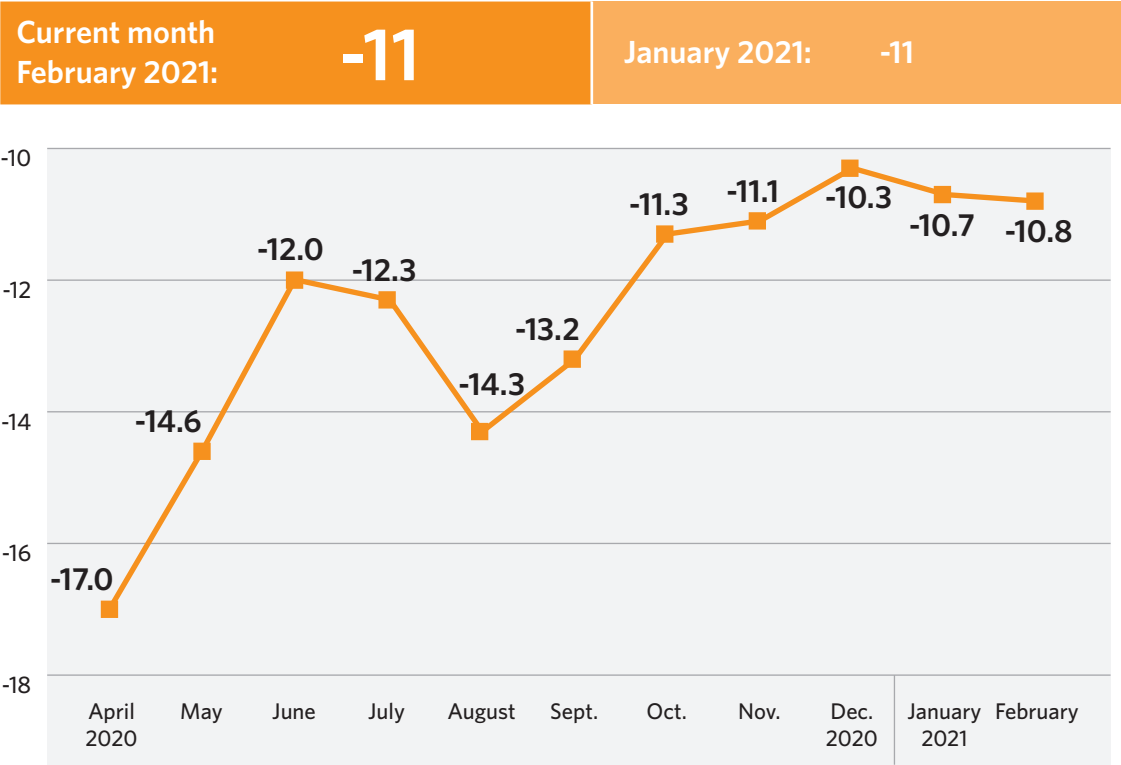
COVID-19's disruption to the mental, physical, social, and financial wellbeing of individuals has turned many to unhealthy coping mechanisms to deal with cumulative stress, and other effects of the prolonged pandemic. **Individuals under the age of 50 were nearly fifty per cent more likely to report an increase in their alcohol consumption early in the pandemic (March to May 2020) compared to those over 60. Parents are twice as likely as non-parents to report that they are drinking more later in the pandemic (October 2020 to January 2021) than earlier.**

As Australians face one year of disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses across the country have had to react, change, and adapt to new processes, threats, and opportunities. It's been a boon for some while others struggle; a swing in either direction could land a business in either a fortuitous or grave scenario. Looking ahead in 2021, **15 per cent of respondents believe that their employer will struggle in 2021**, and this group has the lowest mental health score (-21.4) second only to the one per cent of respondents who believe that their employer will go out of business.



# 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 February 2021 is -11 points.** An eleven-point decrease from the pre-COVID-19 benchmark reflects a population whose mental health is similar to the most distressed three per cent of the benchmark population.



February marks the 11th consecutive month in which the Mental Health Index™ reflects strained mental health in the Australian population.

<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 anxiety (-12.7), followed by depression (-12.2), isolation (-10.9), optimism (-10.6), work productivity (-10.5), and general psychological health (-4.5). The risk measure with the best mental health score, and the only measure above the historical benchmark, is financial risk (3.7).

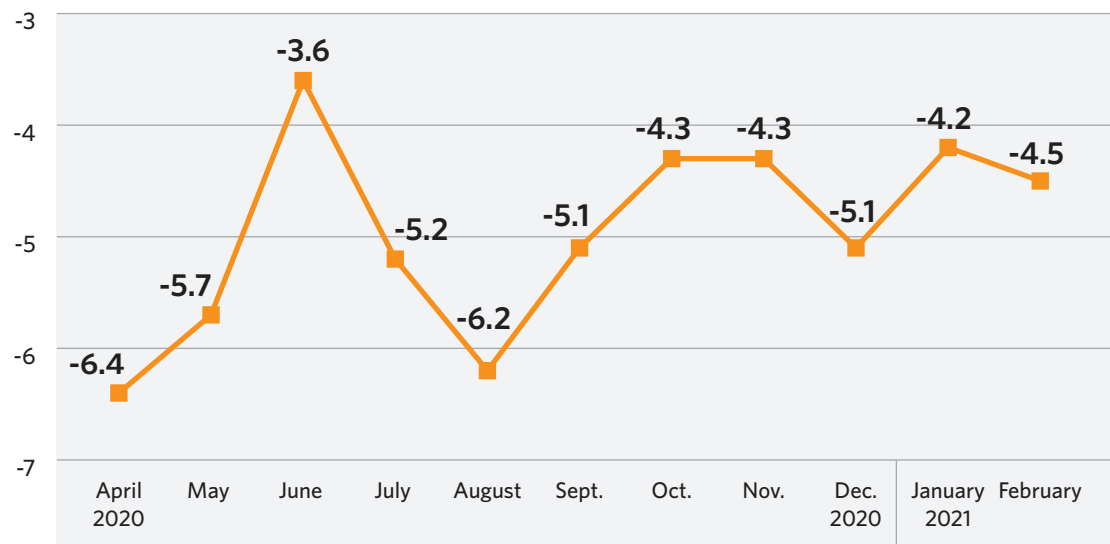
- Depression, general psychological health, and anxiety scores declined since January.
- With a 2.6-point increase, the financial risk score has had the greatest improvement from the prior month.
- Financial risk continues to be the strongest of all sub-scores and is above the pre-2020 benchmark.

MHI sub-scores <sup>2</sup>	February 2021	January 2021
Anxiety	-12.7	-10.9
Depression	-12.2	-10.9
Isolation	-10.9	-11.4
Optimism	-10.6	-10.9
Work productivity	-10.5	-11.0
Psychological health	-4.5	-4.2
Financial risk	3.7	1.1

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



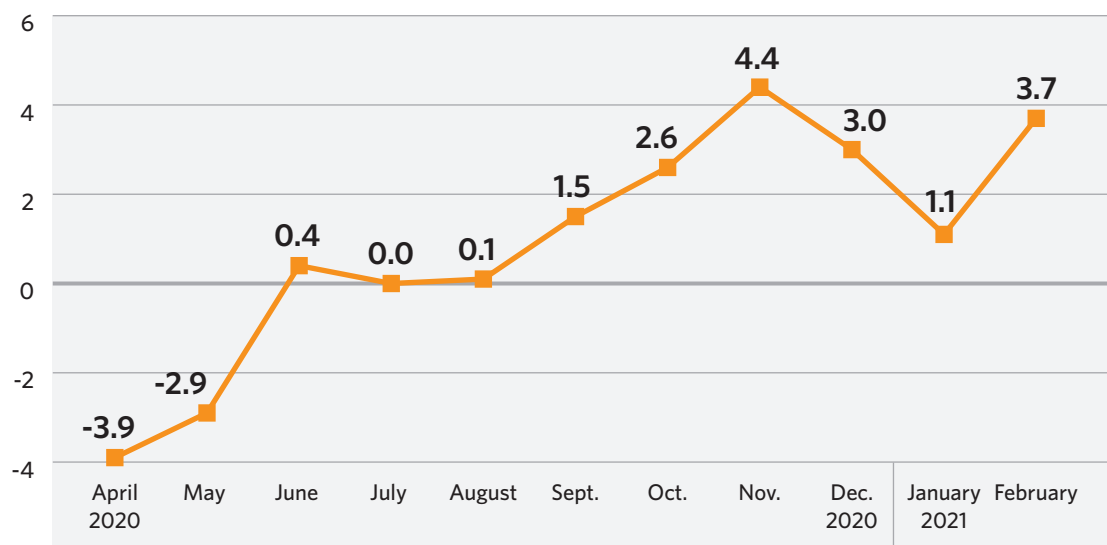
## General psychological health



## General psychological health

From April to June, general psychological health increased from -6.4 to its peak (-3.6). A sharp reversal in July and August brought the score down to near its lowest point in August. From September to November, improvements were observed; however, the general psychological health score fell again in December to a score of -5.1. In January, the general psychological health score increased nearly one-point and has fallen modestly in February.

## Financial Risk



## Financial risk

The financial risk score continues to be the strongest sub-scale despite a significant decline from November 2020 to January 2021. With a 2.7-point increase in February, the financial risk score has had the greatest improvement of all sub-scales from the prior month. The financial risk score continues to remain above the pre-2020 benchmark since June 2020.

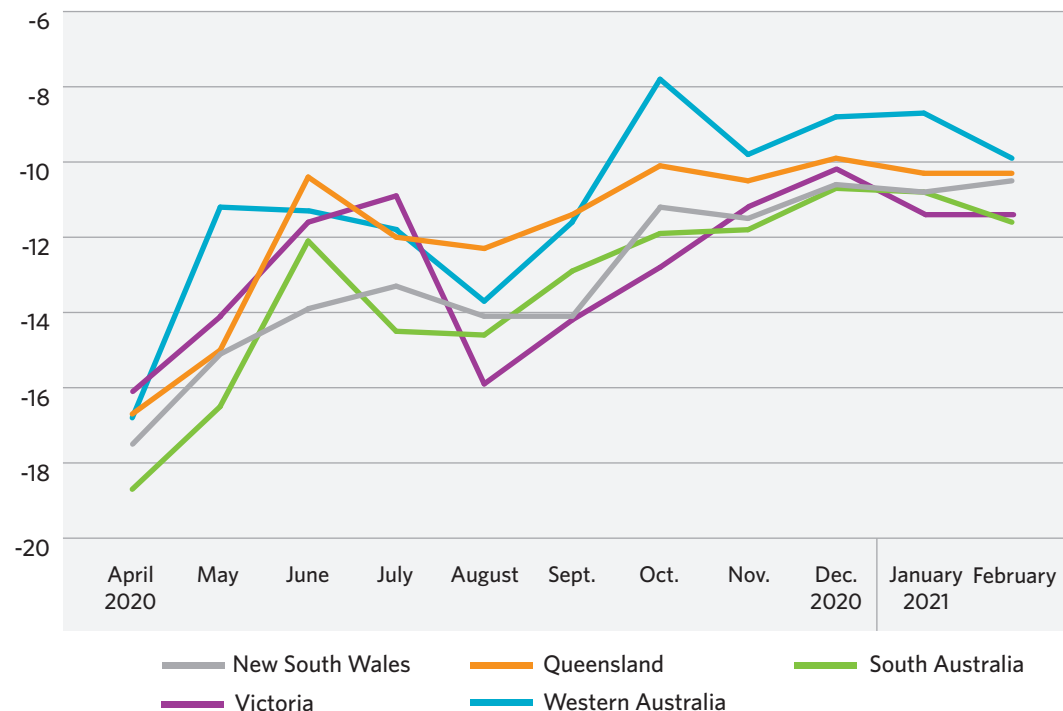


## The Mental Health Index™ (regional)

State mental health scores have shown general improvement between April and June 2020, with all regions showing declines from July to August. Mental health scores across all regions showed a general increase in September but since October, scores have been inconsistent.

- Despite a 1.2-point decline from the prior month, the mental health score in Western Australia remains strongest (-9.9) in February.
- Declines in South Australia and Western Australia drove the slight decline in the overall MHI score for Australia.
- The lowest mental health score in February is observed in South Australia (-11.6), a 0.8-point decline from January.

Australia state Mental Health Index™ scores





## Demographics

- For ten consecutive months, women (-13.1) have a significantly lower mental health score than men (-7.7); mental health scores also improve with age.
- We have seen differences in mental health scores between those with and without children since April. February 2021 continues this trend with lower scores for those with at least one child (-12.0) compared to those without children (-9.9).

## Employment

- Overall, eight per cent of respondents are unemployed. While most individuals remain employed, sixteen per cent report reduced hours or reduced salary.
- Individuals reporting reduced salary compared to the prior month (-25.8) have the lowest mental health score, followed by those not currently employed (-19.7), and those who report fewer hours when compared to the prior month (-18.7).
- Managers have lower mental health scores (-10.4) compared to non-managers (-10.1).
- Individuals who are self-employed/sole proprietors have the highest mental health score (-6.7).
- Respondents who report working for companies with 51-100 employees have the lowest mental health score (-12.5).

## Emergency savings

- Those without emergency savings continue to experience a lower score in mental health (-25.3) than the overall group. Individuals with an emergency fund have a mental health score of -5.5.



Employment status	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Employed</b> (no change in hours/salary)	-7.8	-8.0
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	-18.7	-19.5
<b>Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)</b>	-25.8	-21.4
Not currently employed	-19.7	-14.9
Age group	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Age 20-29</b>	-19.8	-17.7
Age 30-39	-14.8	-13.6
Age 40-49	-8.6	-9.6
Age 50-59	-7.7	-7.7
<b>Age 60-69</b>	-2.5	-3.1
Number of children	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
No children in household	-9.9	-9.6
1 child	-12.0	-12.7
<b>2 children</b>	-13.2	-12.5
<b>3 children or more</b>	-8.9	-8.5
Region	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
New South Wales	-10.5	-10.5
Victoria	-11.4	-11.4
Queensland	-10.3	-10.3
<b>South Australia</b>	-11.6	-10.8
<b>Western Australia</b>	-9.9	-8.7

Gender	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Men</b>	-7.7	-7.9
<b>Women</b>	-13.1	-12.5
Income	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Household Income \$30K/annum</b>	-30.7	-25.1
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	-13.4	-14.9
\$60k to <\$100K	-12.7	-11.5
\$100K to \$150K	-7.8	-7.3
<b>\$150K and over</b>	-3.3	-3.5
Employer size	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Self-employed/sole proprietor</b>	-6.7	-12.4
2-50 employees	-10.0	-10.3
<b>51-100 employees</b>	-12.5	-11.6
101-500 employees	-10.1	-8.2
501-1,000 employees	-11.3	-15.0
1,001-5,000 employees	-8.7	-9.1
5,001-10,000 employees	-6.8	-6.1
More than 10,000 employees	-9.9	-8.9
Manager	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Manager</b>	-10.4	-9.3
<b>Non-manager</b>	-10.1	-10.5

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 Health Index™ (industry)

For the second consecutive month, full-time students have the lowest mental health score (-27.6). This continues to be significantly lower than the next lowest scores among individuals in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (-18.1) and Retail Trade (-16.2).

Individuals employed in Finance and Insurance (-2.3), Other services (except Public Administration) (-5.4), and Construction (-6.0) show the highest mental health scores this month.

Individuals employed in Other services (except Public Administration), Finance and Insurance, and Administrative and Support services have seen the greatest improvement in mental health since last month.

**Improvements from the prior month are shown in the table below:**

Industry	February 2021	January 2021	Improvement
Other services (except Public Administration)	-5.4	-16.5	11.1
Finance and Insurance	-2.3	-6.9	4.7
Administrative and Support services	-7.9	-12.1	4.2
Construction	-6.0	-9.9	3.9
Educational Services	-10.0	-12.2	2.2
Health Care and Social Assistance	-7.5	-9.2	1.7
Food Services	-15.9	-16.9	1.0
Transportation and Warehousing	-11.8	-12.6	0.8
Wholesale Trade	-11.0	-11.2	0.2
Public Administration	-7.9	-7.7	-0.2
Retail Trade	-16.2	-13.9	-2.2
Manufacturing	-10.3	-7.6	-2.7
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	-13.0	-9.7	-3.3
Other	-12.4	-8.0	-4.5
I am a student	-27.6	-23.0	-4.7
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	-18.1	-10.4	-7.7

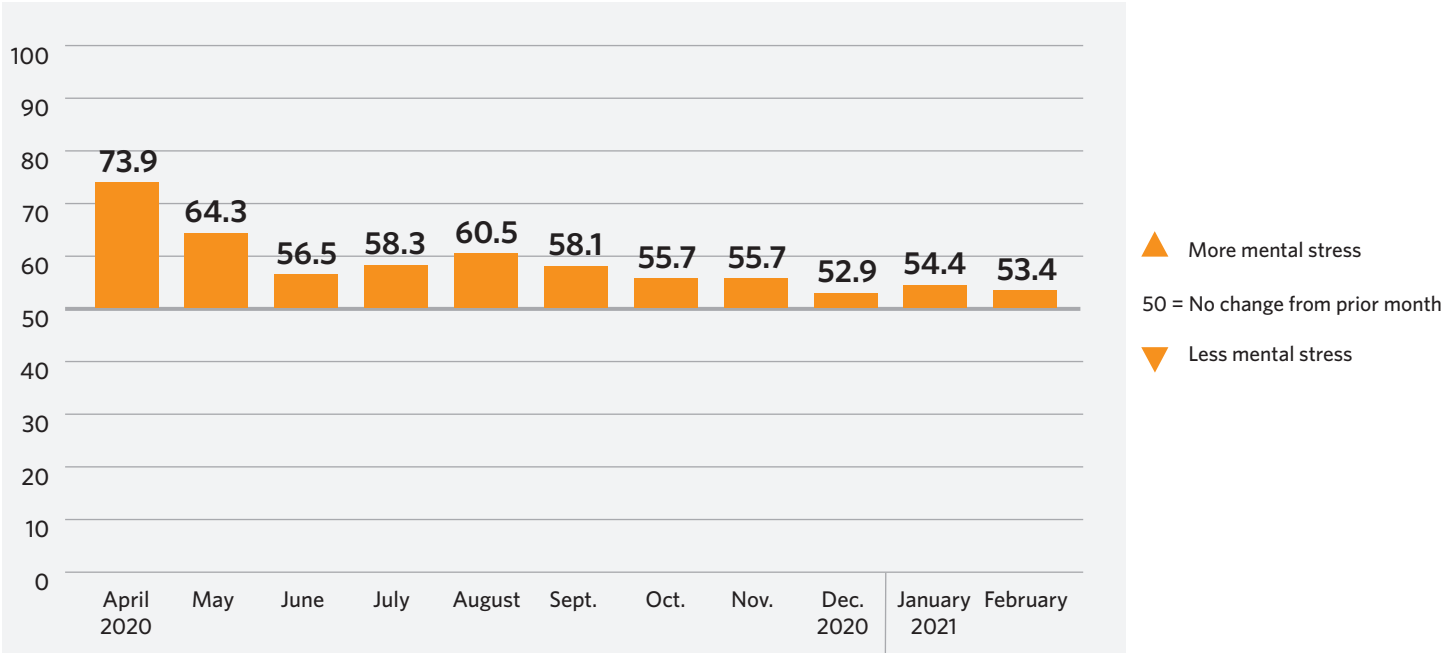


# The Mental Stress Change score

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 February 2021 is 53.4.** This reflects a net increase in mental stress compared to the prior month. The MStressChg score had been declining (meaning those surveyed reported less mental stress) from April to June, then increased in July and August. There was a slight increase in January, and an 1-point improvement in February.

The current score indicates that 17 per cent of the population is experiencing more mental stress compared to the prior month, with 10 per cent experiencing less. A continued increase in mental stress over 11 months indicates a significant accumulation of strain in the population.

Current month February 2021:	53.4	January 2021:	54.4
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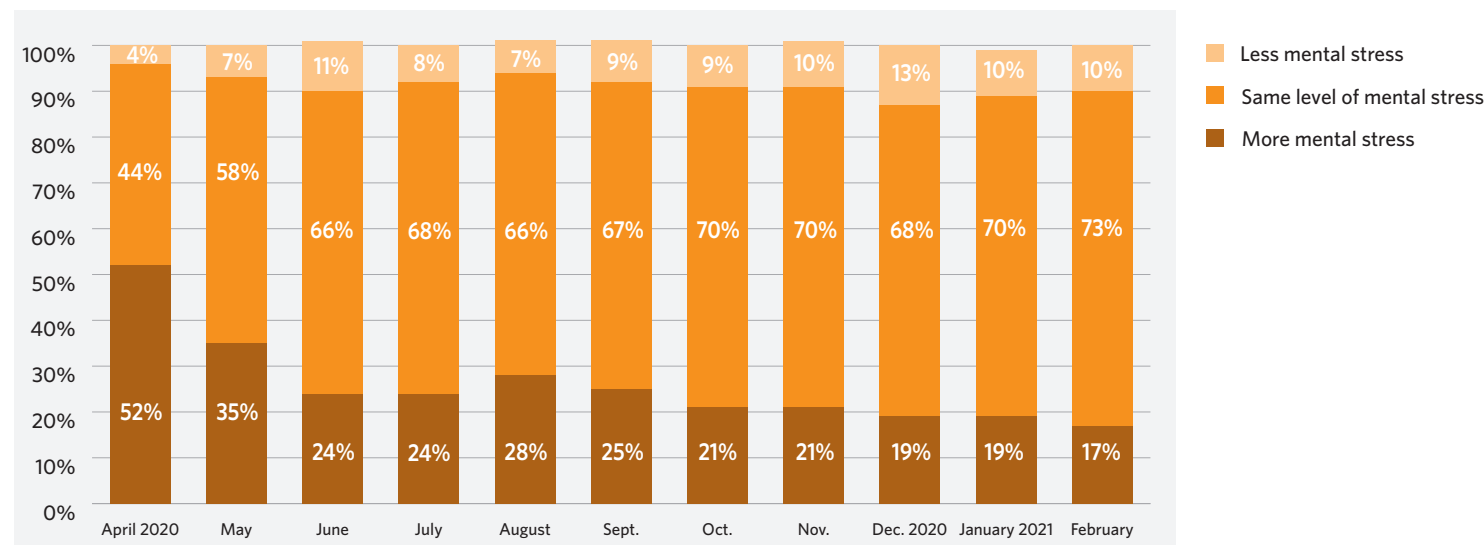
## Mental Stress Change (percentages)

Mental Stress Change tracks each individual's 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 below.

Over the last 11 months, 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 significantly 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, 52 per cent of individuals reported an increase in mental stress. While those reporting increased month-over-month mental stress decreased to 17 per cent in February 2021, 73 per cent of respondents report the same level of mental stress and only 10 report a decrease in mental stress.

**Mental Stress Change by Month**





## Demographics

- As reported in prior months, and seen again in February 2021, younger respondents are experiencing a greater increase in mental stress compared to older respondents.
- Since April 2020, females have had larger increases in mental stress when compared with males.

## Geography

- The greatest increase in stress month-over-month was for respondents living in South Australia (56.9), followed by Western Australia (54.4), New South Wales (53.7), and Queensland (53.4). Respondents living in Victoria (51.5) have the smallest increase in mental stress month-over-month; however, all regions reported increases in mental stress in February.

## Employment

- The greatest increase in mental stress is seen in employed people with reduced salary (64.8), followed by employed people with fewer hours (56.3), compared to unemployed people (52.6) and employed people with no change to salary or hours (52.3).
- The greatest increase in mental stress is observed among managers (55.0), while non-managers have a more modest increase in mental stress (52.3).



Employment status	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Employed</b> (no change in hours/salary)	<b>52.3</b>	<b>53.0</b>
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	56.3	<b>61.6</b>
<b>Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)</b>	<b>64.8</b>	53.8
Not currently employed	52.6	56.1
Age group	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Age 20-29</b>	<b>57.9</b>	<b>55.7</b>
Age 30-39	56.3	55.5
Age 40-49	52.2	56.4
Age 50-59	51.2	53.6
<b>Age 60-69</b>	<b>48.3</b>	<b>48.3</b>
Number of children	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>No children in household</b>	<b>52.8</b>	<b>53.0</b>
<b>1 child</b>	<b>54.3</b>	<b>58.2</b>
2 children	54.2	53.6
3 children or more	53.8	57.0
Region	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
New South Wales	53.7	54.3
<b>Victoria</b>	<b>51.5</b>	53.6
Queensland	53.4	<b>57.6</b>
<b>South Australia</b>	<b>56.9</b>	53.6
Western Australia	54.4	<b>51.8</b>

Gender	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Men</b>	<b>50.8</b>	<b>54.1</b>
<b>Women</b>	<b>55.2</b>	<b>54.8</b>
Income	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Household Income \$30K/annum</b>	<b>62.8</b>	<b>60.9</b>
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	56.0	54.9
\$60k to <\$100K	52.8	53.8
\$100K to \$150K	54.0	54.1
<b>\$150K and over</b>	<b>49.4</b>	<b>51.8</b>
Employer size	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Self-employed/sole proprietor</b>	<b>45.4</b>	53.1
2-50 employees	54.1	54.9
51-100 employees	53.2	53.1
101-500 employees	51.9	52.6
<b>501-1,000 employees</b>	<b>59.0</b>	<b>57.1</b>
1,001-5,000 employees	51.9	<b>51.6</b>
5,001-10,000 employees	55.3	55.6
More than 10,000 employees	52.8	53.6
Manager	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Manager</b>	<b>55.0</b>	<b>55.9</b>
<b>Non-manager</b>	<b>52.3</b>	<b>53.2</b>

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)

Mental Stress Changes scores for individuals employed in Administrative and Support services (47.3), Transportation and Warehousing (47.3), Wholesale Trade (48.1), Finance and Insurance (48.6), and Construction (48.9) are less steep compared to the prior month.

For the second consecutive month, full-time students have the most significant increase in mental stress (63.5) compared to the prior month, followed by individuals employed in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (60.0).

**Mental Stress changes from the last two months are shown in the table below:**

Industry	February 2021	January 2021
Administrative and Support services	47.3	51.9
Transportation and Warehousing	47.3	55.6
Wholesale Trade	48.1	63.2
Finance and Insurance	48.6	53.5
Construction	48.9	53.6
Manufacturing	50.7	52.0
Health Care and Social Assistance	50.8	52.1
Educational Services	51.0	55.7
Public Administration	54.2	53.6
Other services (except Public Administration)	55.6	48.3
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	56.0	53.7
Food Services	56.1	57.7
Retail Trade	56.9	54.2
Other	57.7	55.1
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	60.0	52.4
I am a student	63.5	64.0

# Spotlight

## Mental health stigma

In Australia, one in five people experience some form of mental illness within any 12-month period<sup>3</sup>. Despite the increasing incidence of mental health issues due to the prolonged impact of the pandemic among people of all ages, backgrounds and socio-economic status, stigma affects the way people perceive themselves as well as the way others perceive them. The resulting feelings can amplify an existing mental health issue and may become a barrier to seeking help.

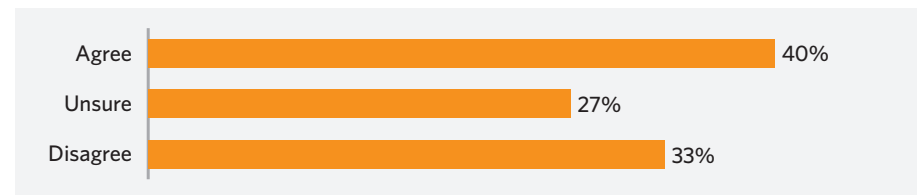
Individuals were asked about mental health self-stigma, how a mental health issue might affect their career, and the perceived effect of mental health on personal relationships.

### Self-stigma

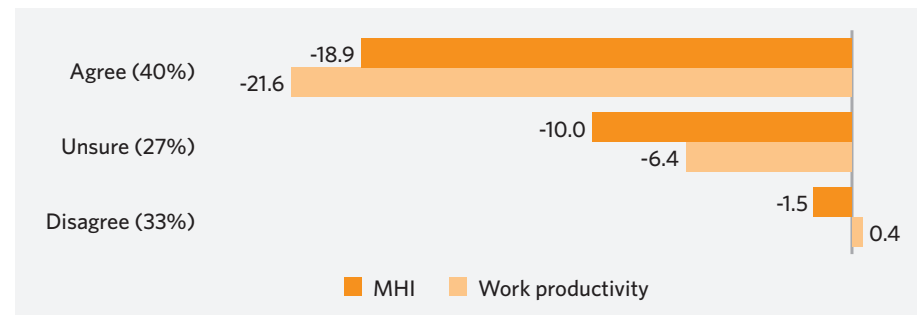
Individuals were asked whether they would feel more negatively about themselves if they had a mental health issue.

- Forty per cent of respondents report that they would feel more negatively about themselves if they had a mental health issue; this group has the lowest mental health score (-18.9).
- Work productivity scores follow the same trend as mental health scores, with those agreeing that they would feel more negatively about themselves if they had a mental health issue reporting the lowest work

### I would feel negatively about myself if I had a mental health issue



### MHI and work productivity scores by agreement about feeling negatively about oneself if a mental health issue exists



<sup>3</sup> The Mental Health of Australians 2: Report on the 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, Australian Government Department of Health, <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-pubs-m-mhaust2>, 2009.



productivity score (-21.6) and those who would not feel more negatively about themselves have the highest work productivity score (0.4).

- Younger people are more likely to report that they would feel more negatively about themselves if they had a mental health issue. Over half (51 per cent) of people aged 30-39 and nearly half (45 per cent) of people aged 20-29 report that they would feel more negatively about themselves compared to less than forty per cent of people in all age groups over 40.
- Managers report that they would feel more negatively about themselves if they had a mental health issue (46 per cent) compared with non-managers (38 per cent).

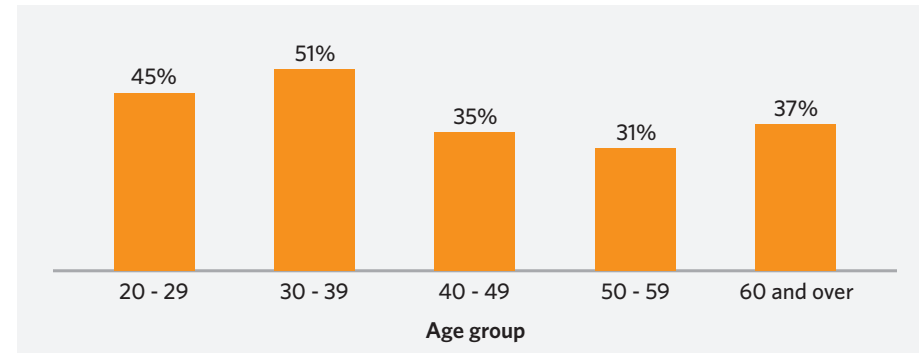
While it is widely assumed that younger individuals are more open about mental health issues, this openness does not preclude a high level of awareness of stigma, nor does it preclude self-judgment. As well, negative self-judgment may exist even though one's judgment of others with mental health issues might not be as negative.

### Perceived impact of mental health issue on friendships

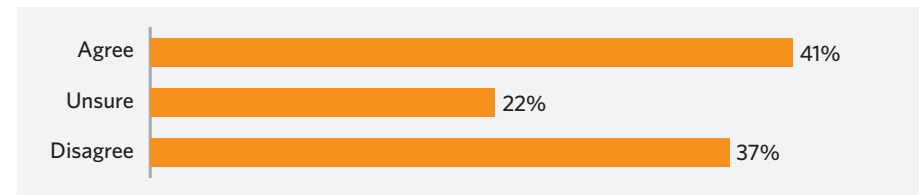
Individuals were asked whether they thought that their friends would treat them differently if they had a mental health issue.

- More than one in four (41 per cent) report that they would be concerned that friends would treat them differently if they had a mental health issue; this group has the lowest mental health score (-17.8).
- Work productivity scores follow the same trend as mental health, with those agreeing that they would be concerned about friends treating them differently

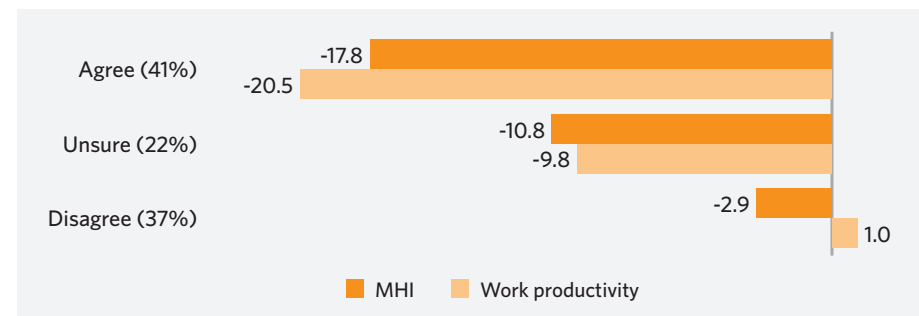
### I would feel negatively about myself if I had a mental health issue



### I would be concerned that my friends would treat me differently if I had a mental health issue



### MHI and work productivity scores by concern that friends would treat me differently if I had a mental health issue





if they had a mental health issue report the lowest work productivity score (-20.5) and those who disagree that their friends would treat them differently having the highest work productivity score (1.0).

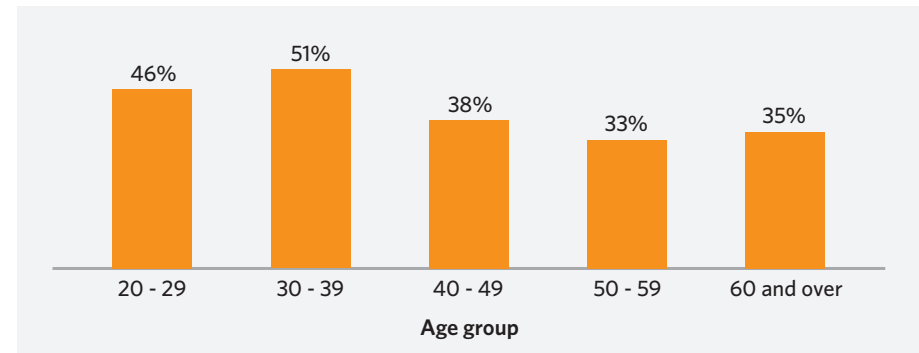
- Younger respondents are more likely to perceive that their friends would treat them differently if they had a mental health issue; more than fifty per cent (51 per cent) of respondents aged 30-39 and forty-six per cent of individuals aged 20-29 would be concerned compared to thirty-three per cent of individuals aged 50-59.
- More than half of managers (52 per cent) report that they would be concerned their friends would treat them differently if they had a mental health issue compared with nearly one-third (36 per cent) of non-managers.

### Perceived impact of mental health issue on career

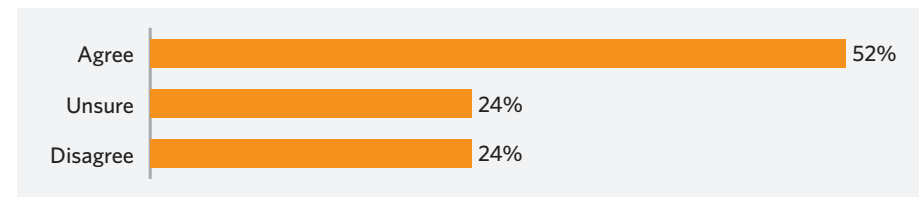
Individuals were asked whether they thought that their career options would be limited if they had a mental health issue of which their workplace were aware.

- More than half (52 per cent) report that their career options would be limited if the workplace were aware of a mental health issue; this group has the lowest mental health score (-16.2).
- Work productivity scores follow the same trend as mental health scores, with those agreeing that their career options would be limited if their workplace were aware of a mental health issue reporting the lowest work productivity score (-18.6) and those who disagree that career options would be limited if they had a mental health issue report the highest productivity score (4.1).

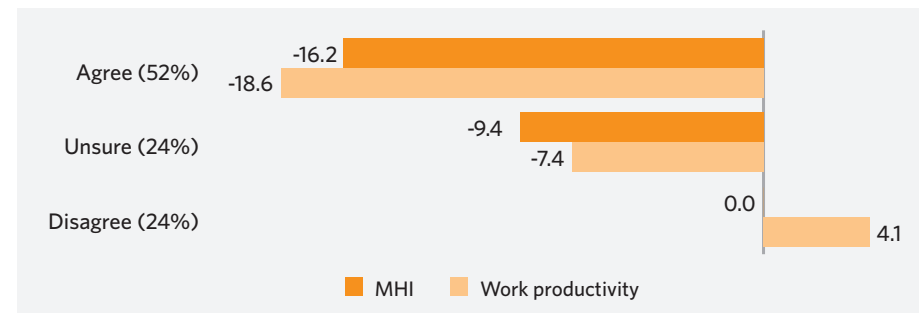
### I would be concerned that my friends would treat me differently if I had a mental health issue



### My career options would be limited if I had a mental health issue and my workplace were aware



### MHI and work productivity scores by agreement that awareness of a mental health issue would limit career options



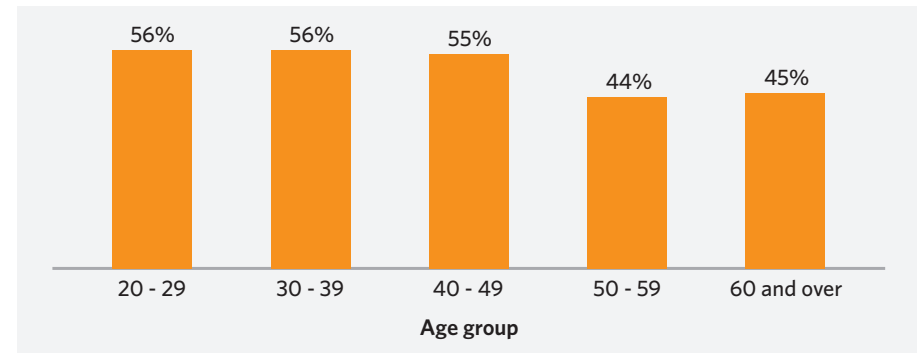


- Younger respondents are more likely to agree that their career options would be limited if their workplace were aware of a mental health issue; over fifty per cent (56 per cent) of respondents aged 20-29 agree compared to forty-four per cent of individuals aged 50-59.
- Nearly sixty per cent (58 per cent) of managers perceive that there would be an impact to their career if their employer knew of a mental health issue compared with non-managers (47 per cent).

Of the three types of stigma studied (self-stigma, workplace stigma, and social stigma) workplace stigma is perceived more prevalently.

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**My career options would be limited if I had a mental health issue, and my workplace were aware**





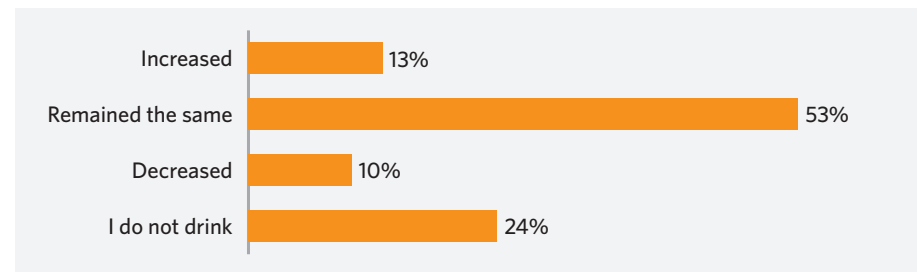
## Alcohol use during the pandemic

Since the inception of the Mental Health Index™ in April 2020, the mental health of Australians has been strained when compared to the pre-2020 benchmark. Further, the proportion of individuals reporting more stress than the prior month has persisted over 11 months. The disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the physical, mental, social, and financial wellbeing of Australians to the extent that many have turned to unhealthy coping mechanisms to deal with cumulative stress, feelings of isolation, loss, etc. Individuals were asked to consider their use of alcohol at two stages during the COVID-19 pandemic.

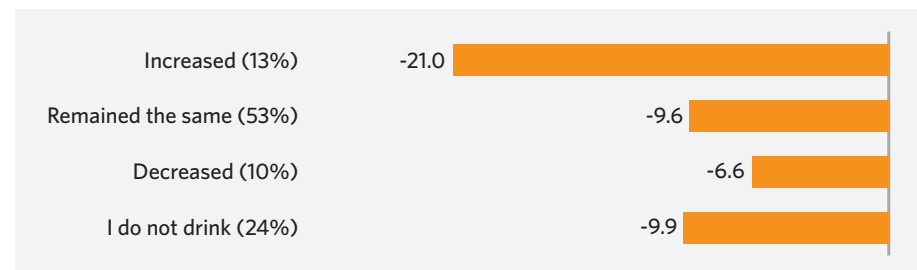
### Alcohol use early in the pandemic (March to May 2020)

- Thirteen per cent of respondents increased their alcohol use from March to May 2020; this group has the lowest mental health score (-21.0).
- Individuals under the age of 50 are nearly fifty per cent more likely to report an increase in their alcohol use from March to May 2020, when compared with those over the age of 60.

### Changes to alcohol consumption early in the pandemic (March to May 2020)



### MHI score by changes to alcohol consumption early in the pandemic

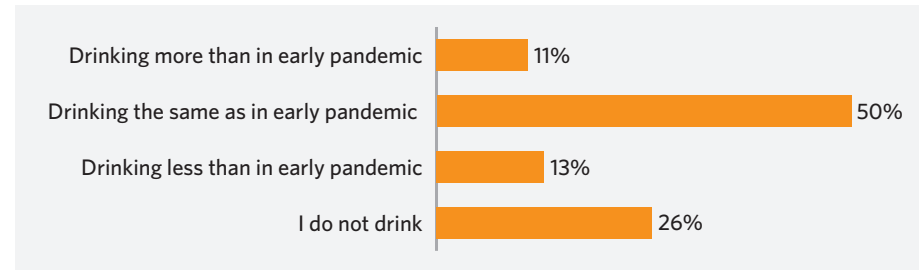




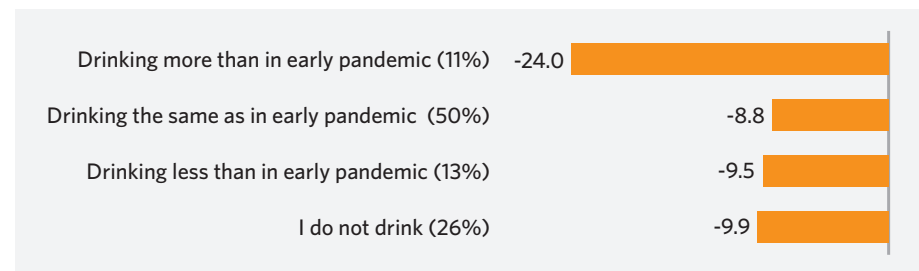
### Alcohol use later in the pandemic (October 2020 to January 2021)

- Eleven per cent of respondents increased their alcohol use from October 2020 to January 2021 compared to earlier in the pandemic; this group has the lowest mental health score (-24.0).
- Thirteen per cent of individuals are drinking less from October 2020 to January 2021 compared to their alcohol intake earlier in the pandemic.
- Parents are twice as likely as non-parents to report that they are drinking more than they were early in the pandemic.
- Managers are more than twice as likely to report that they are drinking more than they were early in the pandemic compared with non-managers.

### Changes to alcohol consumption more recently (October to present)



### MHI score by changes to alcohol consumption more recently (October to present)



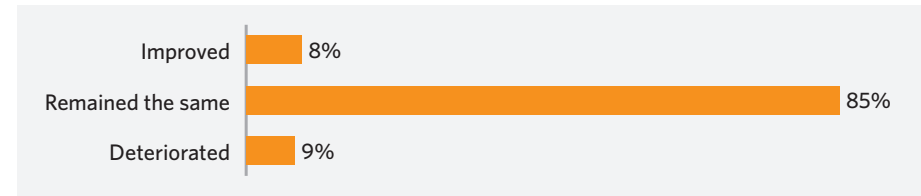


## Employee – manager relationship

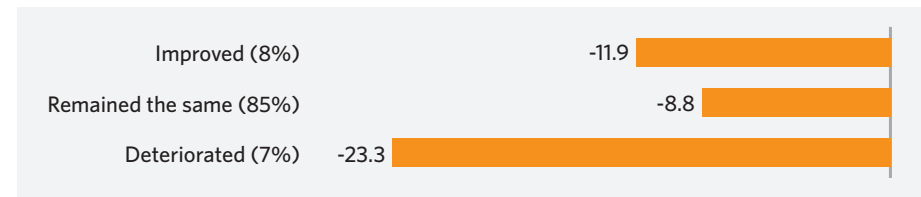
With many employees working from home and others working under modified conditions, workplace interactions have changed dramatically since the pandemic began. Employees were asked how the relationship with their supervisor has changed.

- Eighty-five per cent of individuals report that the relationship with their supervisor has remained the same since the pandemic began; this group has the highest mental health score (-8.8).

### Changes to relationship with supervisor since the pandemic began



### MHI score by changes to relationship with supervisor since the pandemic began





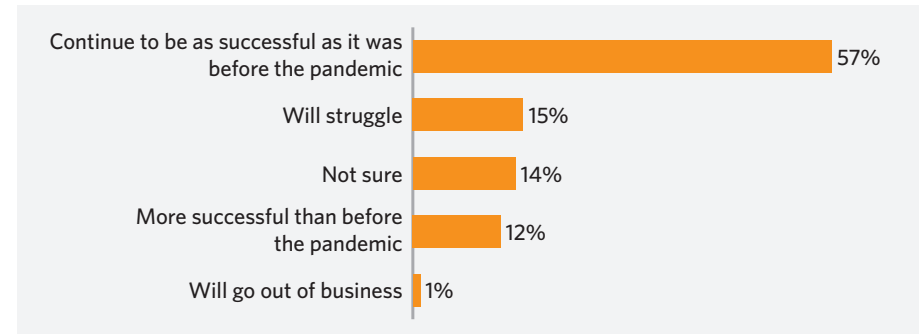
## Organizational stability

As Australians face one year of disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses across the country have had to react, change, and adapt to new processes, threats, and opportunities. While it's been a boon for some, other organizations have struggled. A swing in either direction could land a business in either a fortuitous or a grave situation.

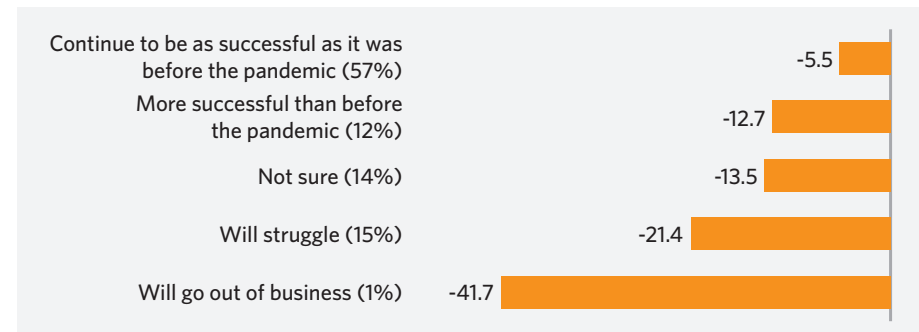
Looking ahead in 2021, employees were asked about the stability of their employer.

- Over half (57 per cent) of individuals believe that their employer will continue to be as successful in 2021 as before the pandemic; this group has the most favourable mental health score (-5.5).
- Fifteen per cent believe that their employer will struggle in 2021, and this group has the lowest mental health score (-21.4) second only to one per cent of respondents who believe that their employer will go out of business in 2021.
- Individuals under the age of 50 are more than twice as likely to report that their organization will be more successful in 2021 compared with those over the age of 50.

## Employee expected trends of organizations through 2021



## MHI score by expected trends of organizations through 2021





# 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 1,000 Australians who are living in Australia 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 Australia. 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 January 15 to January 25, 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. Each individual's scores are added and then divided by the total number of possible points to get a score out of 100. The raw score is the mathematical mean of the individual scores.



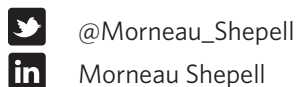
To demonstrate change, the current month's scores are then compared to the benchmark and the prior month. The benchmark is comprised of data from 2017, 2018 and 2019. This was a period of relative social stability and steady economic growth. **The change relative to the benchmark is the Mental Health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

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

### Additional data and analyses

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

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