

# The Mental Health Index™ report

Canada, February 2021



MORNEAU  
SHEPELL 



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## February highlights

**With reports of multiple highly contagious variants of the COVID-19 virus, restrictions across the country and the threat of a third wave, Canadians are navigating uncharted territory as their mental health continues to suffer. February marks 11 consecutive months of diminished mental health when compared to before the pandemic.** The level of mental health in February indicates that **the working population is currently as distressed as the most distressed one per cent of working Canadians, prior to 2020.**

The proportion of individuals reporting more stress than the prior month (24 per cent) is nearly equal to the prior month, while the proportion of individuals reporting less mental stress is only six per cent. The majority (70 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. With recent increases in cases in many regions of the country, and the resulting restrictions, this strain will likely continue until a sufficient proportion of the Canadian population is vaccinated.

General psychological health rose modestly from the prior month; however, it remains below the pre-2020 benchmark. **In February, the psychological health risk score of Canadians is 3.3 points lower than at the start of the Index™**, in April 2020. Further, depression (-13.9), optimism (-12.7) and work productivity (-12.3) scores have all fallen since the prior month.

Provincial mental health scores have been inconsistent from month-to-month since August 2020. In February, the mental health score in Newfoundland and Labrador continues to be the strongest score with a 2-point improvement over the prior month. Despite a nearly two-point increase in January, the lowest mental health score in the country is in Alberta (-12.9).

**For the 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive month, full-time students have the lowest mental health score (-27.8) and the second most significant increase in mental stress (66.7).**

**Individuals reporting reduced salary or reduced hours continue to have lower mental health scores as well as a greater increase in mental stress** when 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. **Thirty-six 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

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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score (-20.3) as well as the lowest work productivity score (-24.6). Nearly half (49 per cent) of respondents aged 20-29 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 forty per cent (44 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 (-17.6) as well as the lowest work productivity score (-21.7).

**More than one-third (37 per cent) of respondents report that they would be concerned that friends would treat them differently if they had a mental health issue;** this cohort has both the lowest mental health score (-18.6) as well as the lowest work productivity score (-23.0).

**People leaders are struggling. The Mental Health Index™ score for managers (-12.2) is lower than for non-managers (-10.9); similarly, managers report a greater increase in mental stress than non-managers.** Forty-two per cent of managers, compared to one-third of non-managers, would feel more negatively about themselves if they had a mental health issue.

**Half of managers believe that their career options would be limited if their employer knew that they had a mental health issue** and nearly half (46 per cent) believe that their friends would treat them differently if they had a mental health issue. Further, **managers are more than fifty per cent more likely to report that they are drinking more from October 2020 to January 2021.**

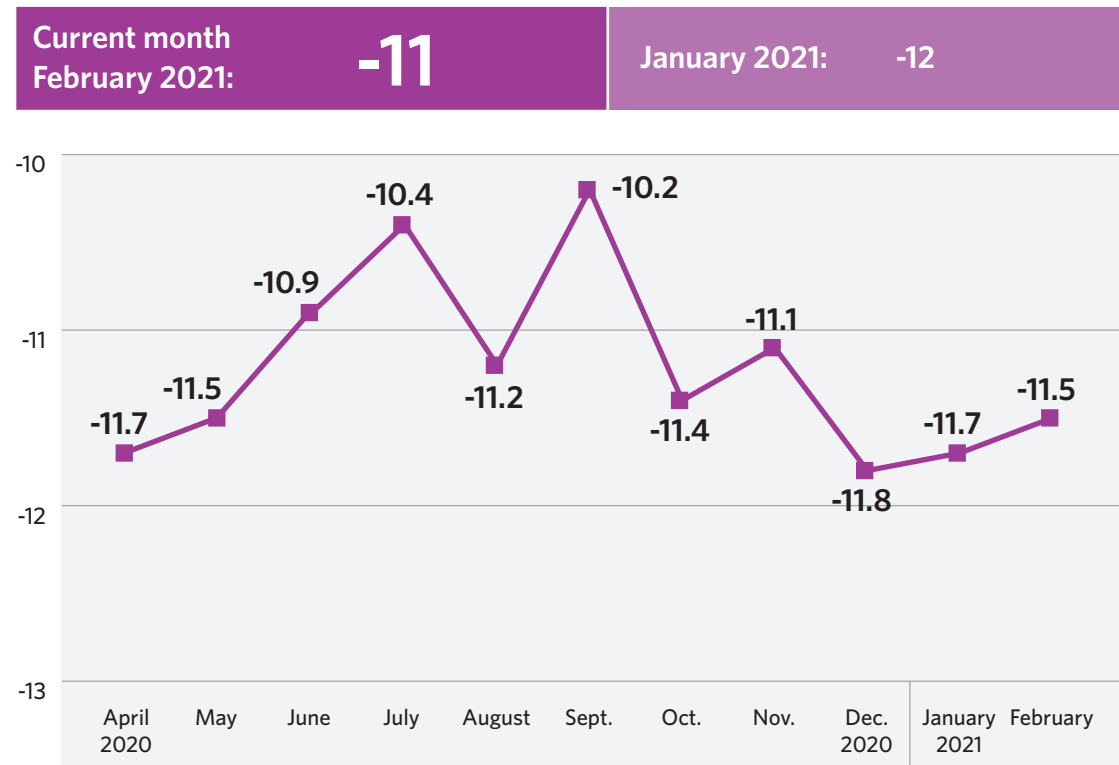
The disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental, physical, social, and financial wellbeing of individuals has turned many to unhealthy coping mechanisms to deal with cumulative stress, and other effects of the prolonged pandemic. **Individuals under the age of 40 are over twice as likely to report an increase in their alcohol intake early in the pandemic (March to May 2020) compared to later (October 2020 to January 2021). Parents are twice as likely as non-parents to report that they are drinking more later in the pandemic than earlier.**

As Canadians 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 other organizations struggle. A swing in either direction could land a business in either a fortuitous or a grave scenario. Looking ahead in 2021, **nearly one-quarter (23 per cent) of respondents believe that their employer will struggle,** and this group has the lowest mental health score (-20.4) 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 -11.5 points.** An eleven-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.



February marks the 11<sup>th</sup> consecutive month in which the Mental Health Index™ reflects strained mental health in the Canadian 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 depression (-13.9), followed by optimism (-12.7), anxiety (-12.6), work productivity (-12.3), isolation (-12.1), and general psychological health (3.7). The risk measure with the best mental health score, and the only measure above the historical benchmark is financial risk (4.0).

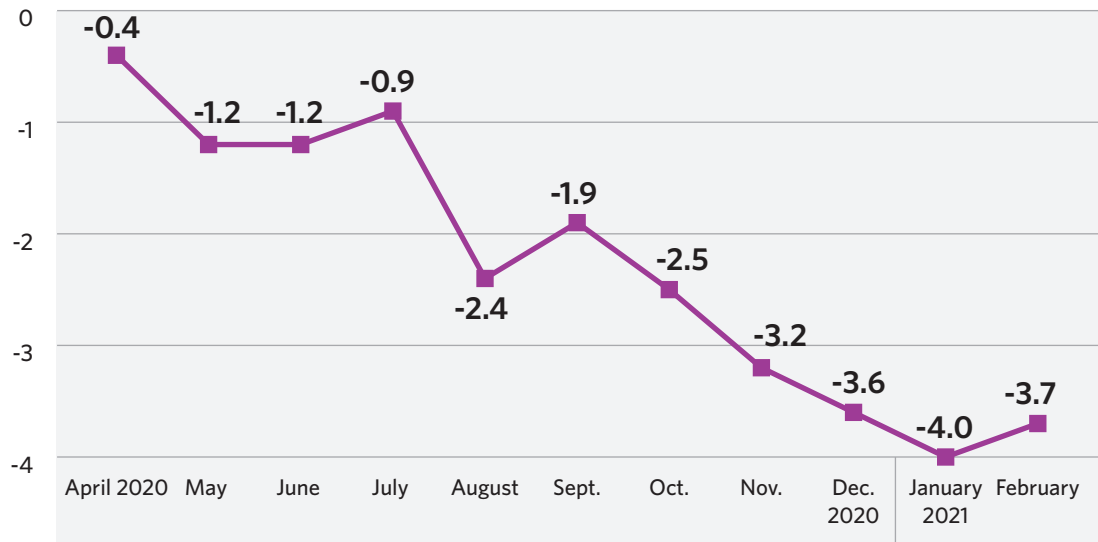
- Work productivity, depression, and optimism scores have declined since January.
- With nearly a one-point increase, the financial risk score has had the greatest improvement from the prior month.
- Financial risk continues to be the strongest of all sub-scores and is well above the pre-2020 benchmark.

MHI sub-scores <sup>2</sup>	February 2021	January 2021
Depression	-13.9	-13.4
Optimism	-12.7	-12.5
Anxiety	-12.6	-13.1
Work productivity	-12.3	-11.6
Isolation	-12.1	-12.8
Psychological health	-3.7	-4.0
Financial risk	4.0	3.2

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



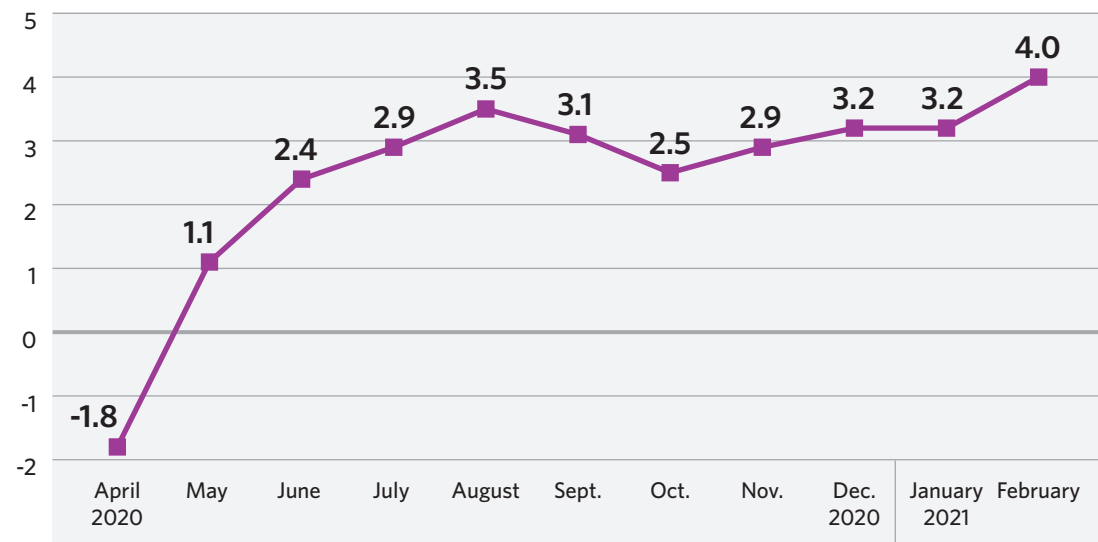
## General psychological health



## General psychological health

Despite two months of modest improvement in July and September within the ten-month period since the launch of the Index™, the psychological health of Canadians has deteriorated. In February, a slight increase in psychological health is observed although the score continues to reside below the pre-2020 benchmark.

## Financial Risk



## Financial risk

The financial risk score has improved 5.8 points from its lowest score in April 2020 (-1.8) to its highest in February 2021 (4.0). It has remained above the pre-2020 benchmark since May 2020.

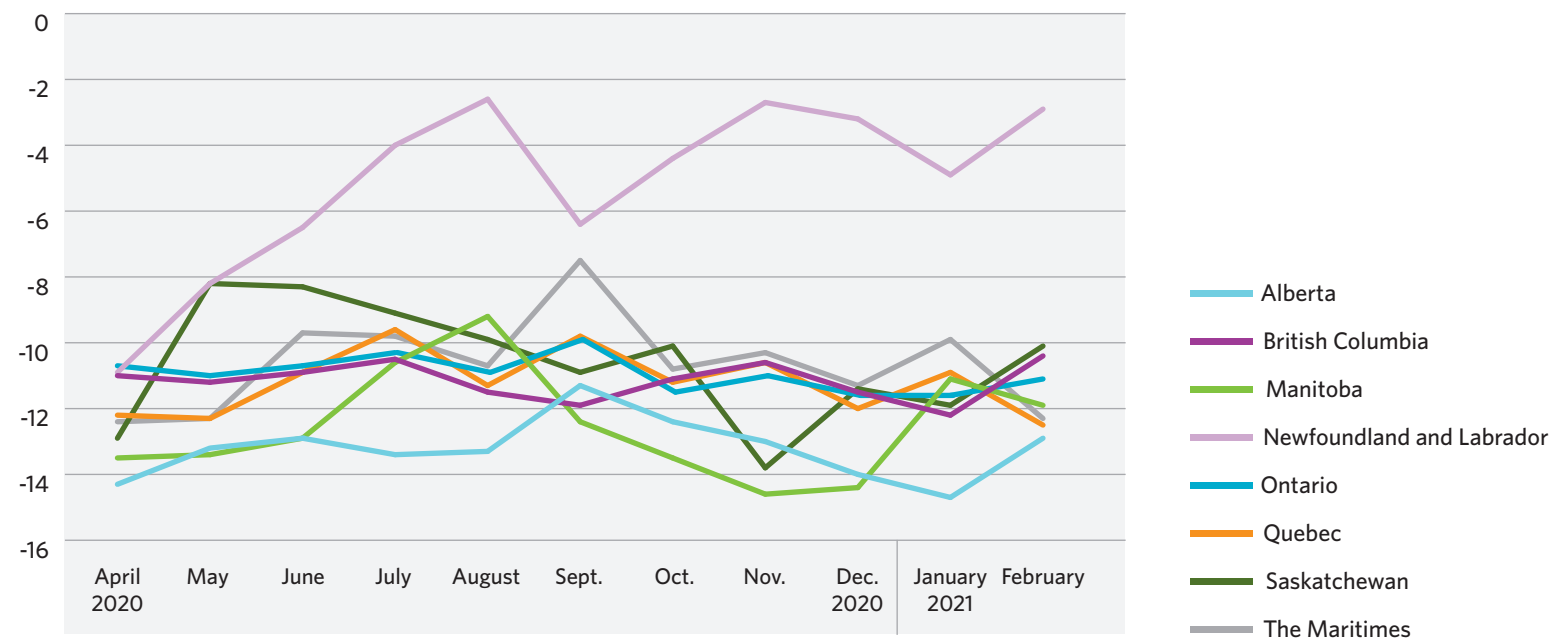


## The Mental Health Index™ (regional)

Provincial mental health scores show general improvement between April and July 2020 with several regions showing declines from July to August. Since August, scores have been inconsistent.

- In February, the mental health score in Newfoundland and Labrador continues to be the strongest provincial score with a 2-point improvement over the prior month.
- Despite a nearly two-point increase in January, Alberta shows the lowest mental health score (-12.9) in February.

Canada provincial Mental Health Index™ scores







## Demographics

- For 11 consecutive months, women (-13.4) have a significantly lower mental health score than men (-9.6); mental health scores also improve with age.
- The variance in the mental health score between those with and without children has been observed since April, and results in February 2021 continue this trend with a lower score for those with at least one child (-13.9) when compared to those without children (-10.4).

## Employment

- Overall, five per cent of respondents are unemployed. While most individuals remain employed, seventeen per cent report reduced hours or reduced salary.
- Individuals reporting reduced salary when compared to the prior month (-19.7) have the lowest mental health score, followed by those who report fewer hours when compared to the prior month (-15.8), and those not currently employed (-14.9).
- Managers have lower mental health scores (-12.2) when compared to non-managers (-10.9).
- Self-employed/sole proprietors have the highest mental health score (-6.9).
- Respondents who report working for companies with 51-100 employees have the lowest mental health score (-14.5).

## Emergency savings

- Those without emergency savings continue to experience a lower score in mental health (-23.4) than the overall group. Individuals with an emergency fund have a mental health score of -6.9.



Employment status	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Employed</b> (no change in hours/salary)	<b>-10.1</b>	<b>-9.8</b>
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	-15.8	-17.6
<b>Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)</b>	<b>-19.7</b>	<b>-26.0</b>
Not currently employed	-14.9	-13.1
<b>Age group</b>	<b>Feb. 2021</b>	<b>Jan. 2021</b>
<b>Age 20-29</b>	<b>-20.7</b>	<b>-21.5</b>
Age 30-39	-16.9	-17.0
Age 40-49	-12.1	-12.2
Age 50-59	-8.2	-9.1
<b>Age 60-69</b>	<b>-5.5</b>	<b>-4.8</b>
<b>Number of children</b>	<b>Feb. 2021</b>	<b>Jan. 2021</b>
<b>No children in household</b>	<b>-10.4</b>	<b>-10.6</b>
<b>1 child</b>	<b>-14.8</b>	<b>-15.3</b>
2 children	-12.6	-12.6
3 children or more	-12.7	-12.9
<b>Province</b>	<b>Feb. 2021</b>	<b>Jan. 2021</b>
<b>Alberta</b>	<b>-12.9</b>	<b>-14.7</b>
British Columbia	-10.4	-12.2
Manitoba	-11.9	-11.1
<b>Newfoundland and Labrador</b>	<b>-2.9</b>	<b>-4.9</b>
The Maritimes	-12.3	-9.9
Quebec	-12.5	-10.9
Ontario	-11.1	-11.6
Saskatchewan	-10.1	-11.9

Gender	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Men</b>	<b>-9.6</b>	<b>-9.6</b>
<b>Women</b>	<b>-13.4</b>	<b>-13.8</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>Feb. 2021</b>	<b>Jan. 2021</b>
<b>Household income &lt;\$30K/annum</b>	<b>-19.3</b>	<b>-21.7</b>
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	-15.6	-15.4
\$60K to <\$100K	-12.1	-12.3
\$100K to <\$150K	-8.5	-9.3
<b>\$150K or more</b>	<b>-4.8</b>	<b>-3.9</b>
<b>Employer size</b>	<b>Feb. 2021</b>	<b>Jan. 2021</b>
<b>Self-employed/sole proprietor</b>	<b>-6.9</b>	<b>-7.5</b>
2-50 employees	-11.3	-10.5
<b>51-100 employees</b>	<b>-14.5</b>	<b>-15.7</b>
101-500 employees	-12.6	-13.3
501-1,000 employees	-12.3	-12.2
1,001-5,000 employees	-12.1	-11.1
5,001-10,000 employees	-10.5	-11.3
More than 10,000 employees	-9.3	-11.1
<b>Manager</b>	<b>Feb. 2021</b>	<b>Jan. 2021</b>
<b>Manager</b>	<b>-12.2</b>	<b>-13.2</b>
<b>Non-manager</b>	<b>-10.9</b>	<b>-10.7</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 Health Index™ (industry)

For the ninth consecutive month, students have the lowest mental health score (-27.8). This score continues to be significantly lower than the next lowest scores: individuals in Management of Companies and Enterprises (-17.6), and Accommodation and Food Services (-16.6). The highest mental health scores this month are observed among individuals employed in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (-6.5), Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction (-7.3), and Public Administration (-7.5). Individuals employed in Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction, the Information and Cultural Industries, and Retail Trade have seen the greatest improvement in mental health since last month.

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

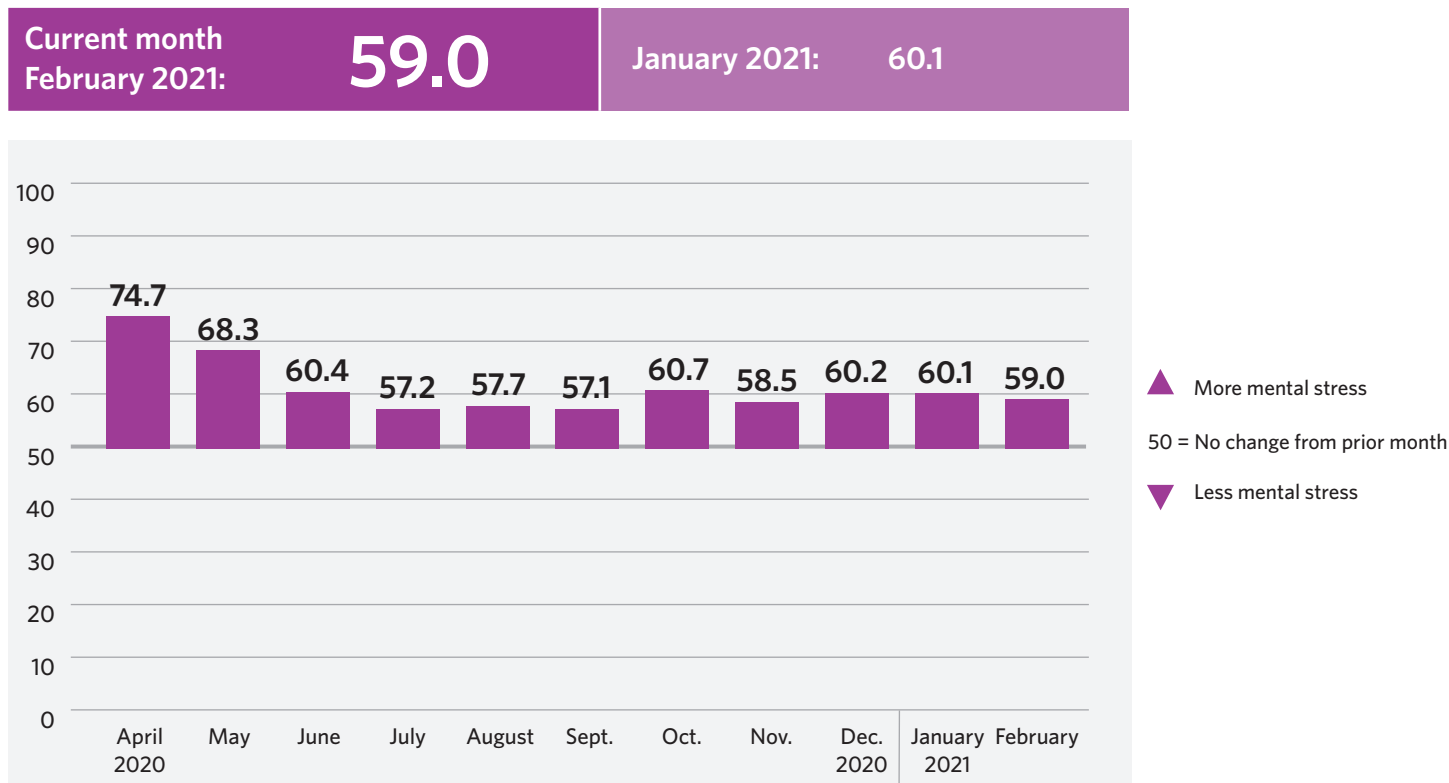
Industry	February 2021	January 2021	Improvement
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	-7.3	-10.0	2.7
Information and Cultural Industries	-16.6	-18.9	2.3
Retail Trade	-11.6	-13.9	2.2
Other services (except Public Administration)	-9.4	-11.4	2.0
Wholesale Trade	-9.9	-11.9	2.0
Public Administration	-7.5	-9.5	2.0
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	-6.5	-8.2	1.7
Other	-8.8	-10.3	1.5
Manufacturing	-10.2	-11.1	0.9
Finance and Insurance	-13	-13.6	0.6
Educational Services	-12.7	-13.1	0.4
Construction	-10.3	-10.7	0.4
Utilities	-15	-15.3	0.3
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	-8.7	-8.5	-0.2
Health Care and Social Assistance	-12.6	-11.9	-0.7
Full-time student	-27.8	-26.7	-1.1
Automotive Industry	-9.0	-7.5	-1.5
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	-11.2	-8.8	-2.4
Accommodation and Food Services	-16.6	-14.1	-2.6
Transportation and Warehousing	-13.1	-10.6	-2.6
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	-16.4	-12	-4.3
Management of Companies and Enterprises	-17.6	-8.1	-9.5



## 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 59.0.** This reflects a net increase in mental stress compared to the prior month. The steepness of the increase had been declining, month-over-month through September, then increased in October, declined slightly in November, and increased again in December. The score in February remains nearly unchanged from the prior three months.

The current score indicates that 24 per cent of the population is experiencing more mental stress compared to the prior month, with 6 per cent experiencing less. A continued increase in mental stress over 11 months indicates a significant accumulation of strain in the population.





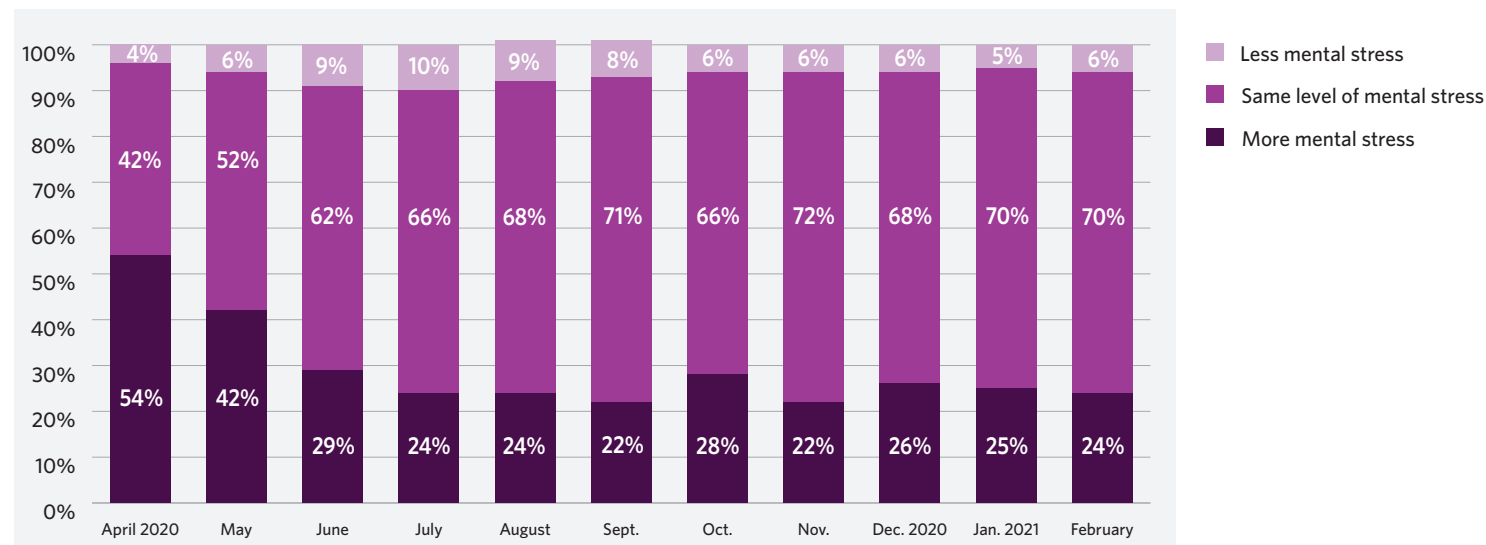
## Mental Stress Change (percentages)

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, 54 per cent of individuals reported an increase in mental stress. While those reporting increased month-over-month mental stress decreased to 24 per cent in February 2021, 70 per cent of respondents report the same level of mental stress and only 6 per cent report a decrease in mental stress.

**Mental Stress Change by Month**





## Demographics

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

## Geography

- The greatest increase in stress month-over-month is for respondents living in Alberta (60.6), followed by Ontario (60.5), The Maritimes (58.6), and Manitoba (58.2). Respondents living in provinces where the increase in mental stress was less, still had significant increases. They include Quebec (57.7), followed by British Columbia (56.3), Saskatchewan (56.1), and Newfoundland and Labrador (50.9).

## Employment

- The greatest increase in mental stress is seen in employed people with reduced salary (64.7), followed by employed people with reduced hours (62.4), compared to unemployed people (60.0) and employed people with no change to salary or hours (58.0).
- The greatest increase in mental stress is observed among managers (60.4) while non-managers have a more modest increase in mental stress (58.3).





Employment status	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Employed</b> (no change in hours/salary)	<b>58.0</b>	<b>59.1</b>
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	62.4	63.2
<b>Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)</b>	<b>64.7</b>	<b>69.9</b>
Not currently employed	60.0	59.9
<b>Age group</b>	<b>Feb. 2021</b>	<b>Jan. 2021</b>
<b>Age 20-29</b>	<b>61.5</b>	<b>65.0</b>
Age 30-39	60.8	63.5
Age 40-49	59.9	59.5
<b>Age 50-59</b>	<b>57.3</b>	58.9
Age 60-69	57.9	<b>56.9</b>
<b>Number of children</b>	<b>Feb. 2021</b>	<b>Jan. 2021</b>
<b>No children in household</b>	<b>58.1</b>	<b>58.7</b>
<b>1 child</b>	<b>61.6</b>	<b>64.3</b>
2 children	59.9	62.0
3 children or more	59.4	62.3
<b>Province</b>	<b>Feb. 2021</b>	<b>Jan. 2021</b>
<b>Alberta</b>	<b>60.6</b>	<b>67.1</b>
British Columbia	56.3	60.5
Manitoba	58.2	61.9
<b>Newfoundland and Labrador</b>	<b>50.9</b>	56.4
The Maritimes	58.6	58.7
Quebec	57.7	<b>56.1</b>
Ontario	60.5	59.9
Saskatchewan	56.1	60.7

Gender	Feb. 2021	Jan. 2021
<b>Men</b>	<b>57.1</b>	<b>58.2</b>
<b>Women</b>	<b>60.9</b>	<b>62.1</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>Feb. 2021</b>	<b>Jan. 2021</b>
<b>Household income &lt;\$30K/annum</b>	<b>61.5</b>	<b>61.6</b>
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	58.5	60.4
\$60K to <\$100K	59.0	60.7
<b>\$100K to &lt;\$150K</b>	<b>58.2</b>	60.6
\$150K or more	60.4	<b>57.4</b>
<b>Employer size</b>	<b>Feb. 2021</b>	<b>Jan. 2021</b>
Self-employed/sole proprietor	58.3	<b>57.4</b>
2-50 employees	58.1	59.1
51-100 employees	58.0	61.6
101-500 employees	59.8	<b>62.3</b>
501-1,000 employees	58.2	61.4
<b>1,001-5,000 employees</b>	<b>62.3</b>	60.5
5,001-10,000 employees	61.8	59.8
<b>More than 10,000 employees</b>	<b>56.1</b>	59.4
<b>Manager</b>	<b>Feb. 2021</b>	<b>Jan. 2021</b>
<b>Manager</b>	<b>60.4</b>	<b>62.2</b>
<b>Non-manager</b>	<b>58.3</b>	<b>58.9</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 Change scores for individuals employed in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (50.0), the Automotive Industry (55.4), and Other services (except Public Administration) (55.5) are less steep when compared to the prior month.

Individuals working in Management of Companies and Enterprises have the most significant increase in mental stress (67.2), followed by students (66.7), and those employed in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (65.9).

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

Industry	February 2021	January 2021
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	50.0	50.0
Automotive Industry	55.4	56.1
Other services (except Public Administration)	55.5	60.0
Transportation and Warehousing	56.4	53.5
Other	57.1	60.5
Manufacturing	57.2	58.1
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	58.0	59.6
Finance and Insurance	58.4	60.5
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	58.5	56.8
Retail Trade	58.5	58.9
Public Administration	58.5	61.8
Utilities	58.8	62.5
Accommodation and Food Services	59.7	62.8
Wholesale Trade	60.0	63.7
Educational Services	60.2	62.2
Health Care and Social Assistance	60.3	61.6
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	60.4	59.7
Information and Cultural Industries	61.4	65.2
Construction	61.5	61
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	65.9	56.3
Full-time student	66.7	67.5
Management of Companies and Enterprises	67.2	59.1



## Spotlight

### Mental health stigma

In Canada, 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

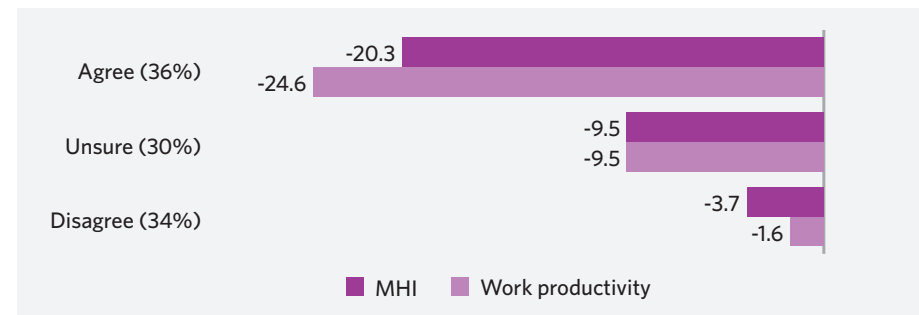
Individuals were asked whether they would feel more negatively about themselves if they had a mental health issue.

- Thirty-six 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 (-20.3).
- 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

#### 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> Making the Case for Investing in Mental Health in Canada, Mental Health Commission of Canada, [https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2016-06/Investing\\_in\\_Mental\\_Health\\_FINAL\\_Version\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2016-06/Investing_in_Mental_Health_FINAL_Version_ENG.pdf), 2013.



work productivity score (-24.6) and those who would not feel more negatively about themselves have the highest work productivity score (-1.6).

- Younger people are more likely to report that they would feel more negatively about themselves if they had a mental health issue; nearly half (49 per cent) of respondents aged 20-29 report that they would feel more negatively about themselves compared to twenty-eight per cent of individuals aged 60 and above.
- Managers report that they would feel more negatively about themselves if they had a mental health issue (42 per cent) when compared with non-managers (33 per cent).

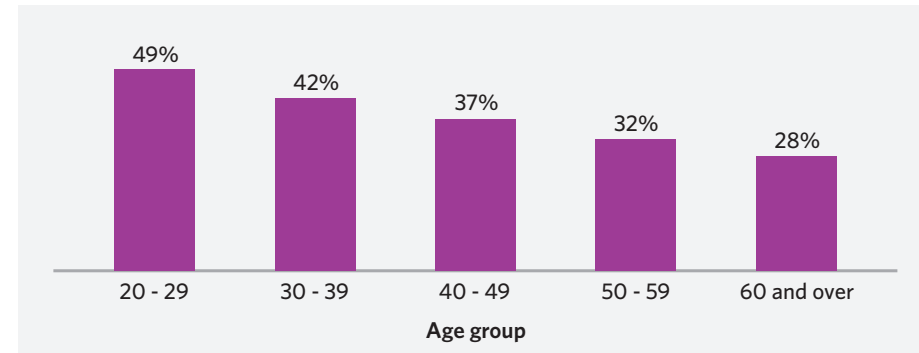
While it is widely assumed that younger individuals are more open about mental health issues, this openness does not preclude a high level of awareness of stigma, nor does it preclude self-judgment. As well, negative self-judgment may exist even though one's judgment of others with mental health issues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

- Thirty-seven 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 the lowest mental health score (-18.6).
- Work productivity scores follow the same trend as mental health, with those agreeing that they would be concerned about friends treating them differently

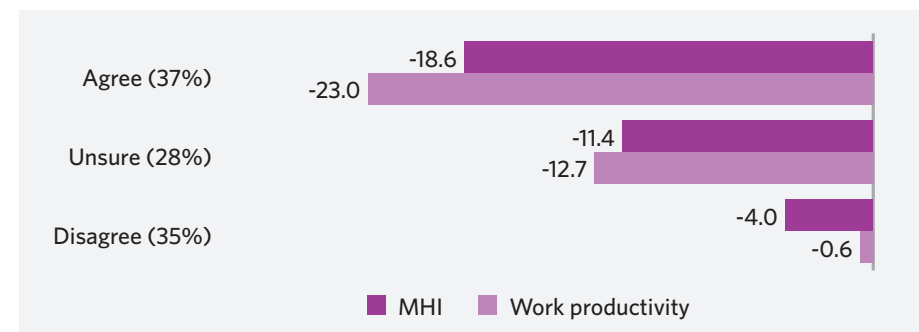
### I would feel negatively about myself if I had a mental health issue



### 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 individuals differently if aware of a mental health issue





if they had a mental health issue report the lowest work productivity score (-23.0) and those who disagree that their friends would treat them differently having the highest work productivity score (-0.6).

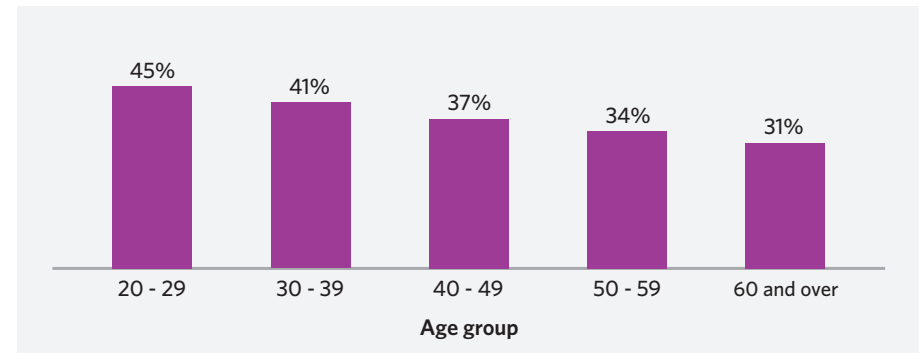
- Younger respondents are more likely to perceive that their friends would treat them differently if they had a mental health issue; nearly fifty per cent (45 per cent) of respondents aged 20-29 would be concerned compared to thirty-one per cent of individuals aged 60 and above.
- Almost half of managers (46 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 (32 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 was aware.

- Forty-four per cent of respondents 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 (-17.6).
- 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 (-21.7) and those who disagree that career options would be limited if they had a mental health issue report the highest productivity score (1.3).

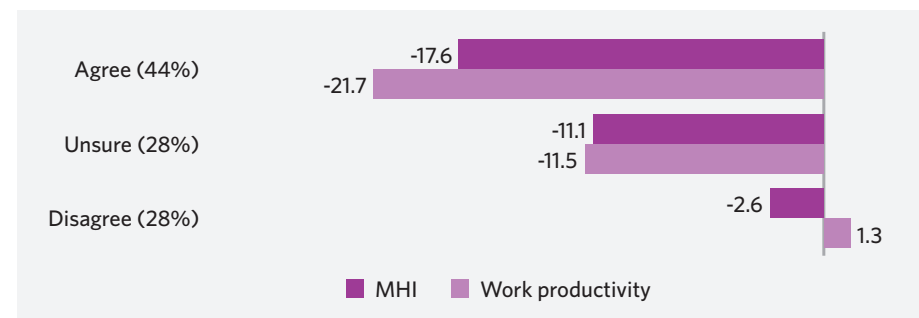
### I would be concerned that my friends would treat me differently if I had a mental health issue



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



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



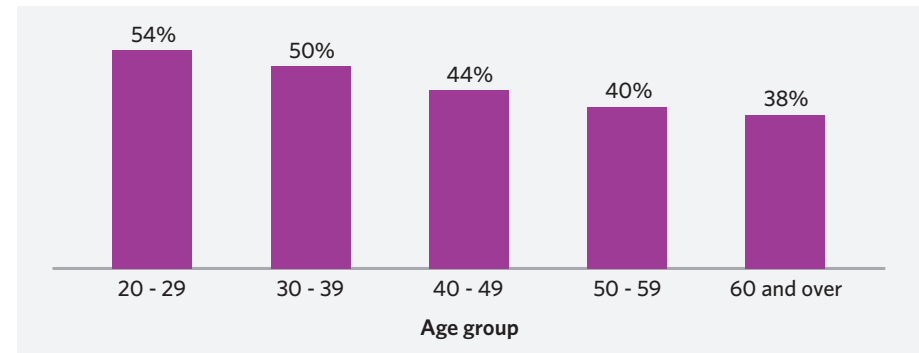


- Younger respondents are more likely to agree that their career options would be limited if their workplace were aware of a mental health issue; over fifty per cent (54 per cent) of respondents aged 20-29 agree compared to forty per cent of individuals aged 50-59.
- Fifty per cent of managers perceive that there would be an impact to their career if their employer knew of a mental health issue compared with non-managers (39 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 is aware**







## Alcohol use during the pandemic

Since the inception of the Mental Health Index™ in April 2020, the mental health of Canadians 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 Canadians 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.

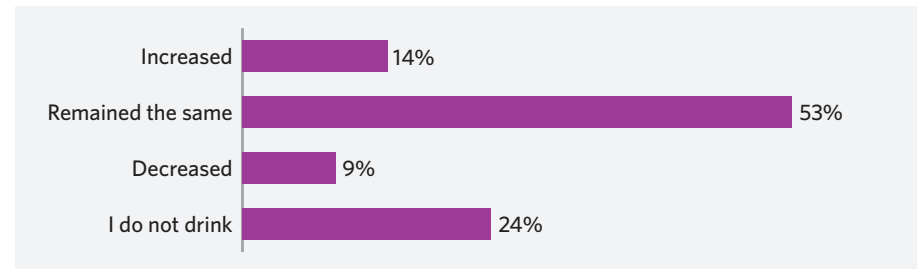
### Alcohol use early in the pandemic (March to May 2020)

- Fourteen per cent of respondents increased their alcohol use from March to May 2020; this group has the lowest mental health score (-20.7).
- Individuals under the age of 40 are more than twice as likely to report an increase in their alcohol use from March to May 2020, compared with those over the age of 60.

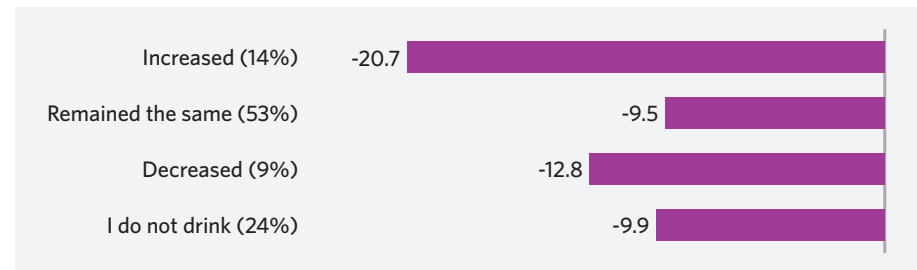
### Alcohol use later in the pandemic (October 2020 to January 2021)

- Nine 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 (-24.8).
- Thirteen per cent of individuals are drinking less from October 2020 to January 2021 compared to their alcohol intake earlier in the pandemic.

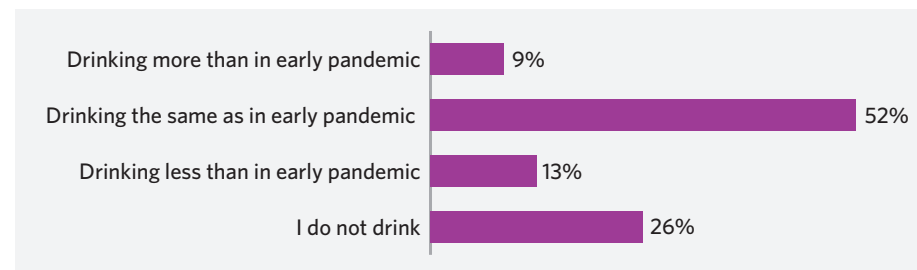
### Changes to alcohol consumption early in the pandemic (March to May 2020)



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



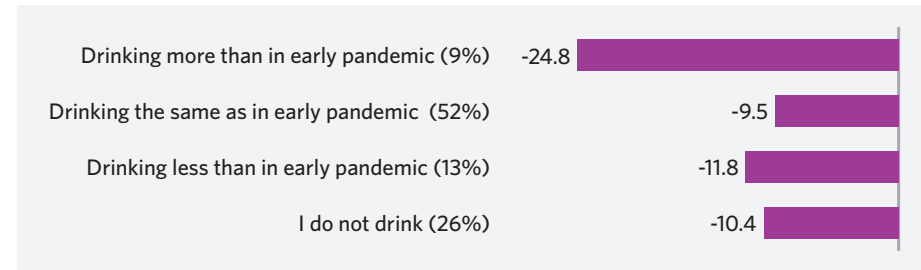
### Changes to alcohol consumption (October 2020 to January 2021)





- 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 fifty per cent more likely to report that they are drinking more than they were early in the pandemic compared with non-managers.

#### MHI score by changes to alcohol consumption (October 2020 to January 2021)





## Employee – manager relationship

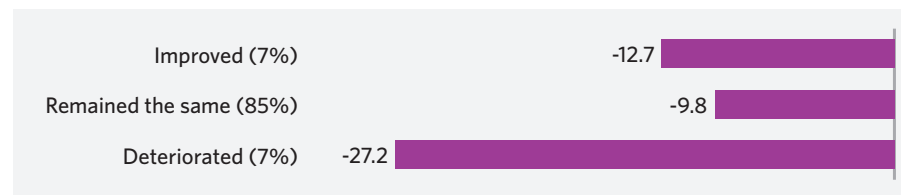
With many employees working from home and others working under modified conditions, workplace interactions have changed dramatically since before the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees were asked how the relationship with their supervisor has changed since the pandemic began.

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 (-9.8).

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



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



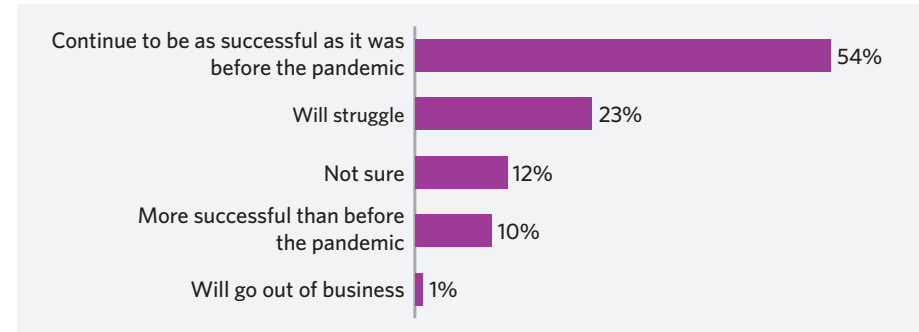


## Organizational stability

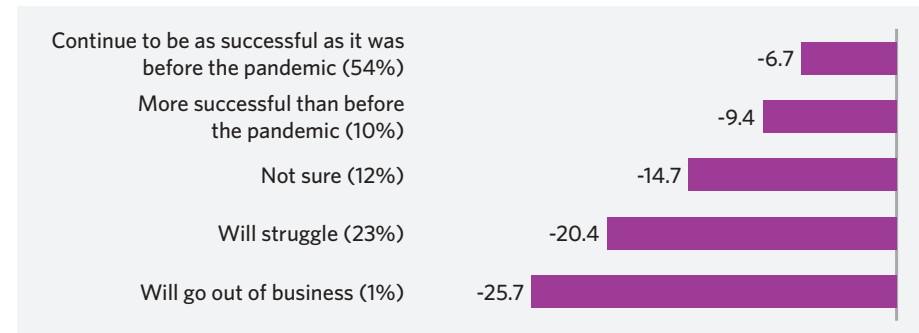
As Canadians face one year of disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses across the country have had to react, change, and adapt to new processes, threats, and opportunities. While it's been a boon for some, other organizations have struggled. A swing in either direction could land a business in either a fortuitous or a grave situation. Looking ahead in 2021, employees were asked about the stability of their employer.

- Over half (54 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 (-6.7).
- Nearly one-quarter (23 per cent) of respondents believe that their employer will struggle in 2021, and this group has the lowest mental health score (-20.4) 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 40 are more than fifty per cent more likely to report that their organization will be more successful in 2021 compared with those over the age of 40.
- Employees working in organizations with between 2 and 1,000 employees are fifty per cent more likely to believe that their organization will struggle in 2021 compared with sole-proprietors and employees of organizations with more than 1,000 employees.

## Employee expected trends of their employer through 2021



## MHI score by expected trends of their employer 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 3,000 Canadians who are living in Canada 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 Canada. 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)



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



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