

The Mental Health Index by LifeWorks™

Australia | April 2022



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The top 5 things you need to know for April 2022

1. The mental health of Australians has been at a negative level for more than two years, suggesting a “reset” well below the pre-2020 benchmark.

- At -11.9, the mental health of Australians has remained unchanged since January 2022.
- Depression, anxiety, work productivity, and financial risk scores declined from March to April 2022.
- Despite a significant 2.6-point decline this month, dropping to a level not seen in 10 months, the strongest sub-score continues to be financial risk, representing an improvement in the level of emergency savings compared to 2019.
- Mental health scores improved in South Australia, New South Wales, and Western Australia, while Queensland and Victoria saw declines in mental health.

2. More than four in ten say the pandemic has had a negative impact on their ongoing mental health.

- 41% indicate the pandemic has had a negative impact on their ongoing mental health and this group has a mental health score 10 points below the national average.
- There are no significant differences in the gender, age, or income profile of respondents who report a negative impact of the pandemic on their ongoing mental health.

3. Nearly three in five Australians would reach out for professional help if struggling with stress or a mental health issue.

- 55% are likely to reach out for professional help and this group has a mental health score nearly three points higher than the national average.
- 18% are unlikely to reach out for professional help and this group has a mental health score more than five points below the national average.

4. Nearly half of Australians are feeling more sensitive to stress.

- 46% are feeling more sensitive to stress compared to before the pandemic and this group has a mental health score more than nine points below the national average.
- 46% notice their colleagues are more sensitive to stress compared to before the pandemic.

55%

are likely to reach out for professional help for stress or a mental health issue

46%

are feeling more sensitive to stress compared to before the pandemic

41%

feel the pandemic has had a negative impact on their mental health

4 in 10

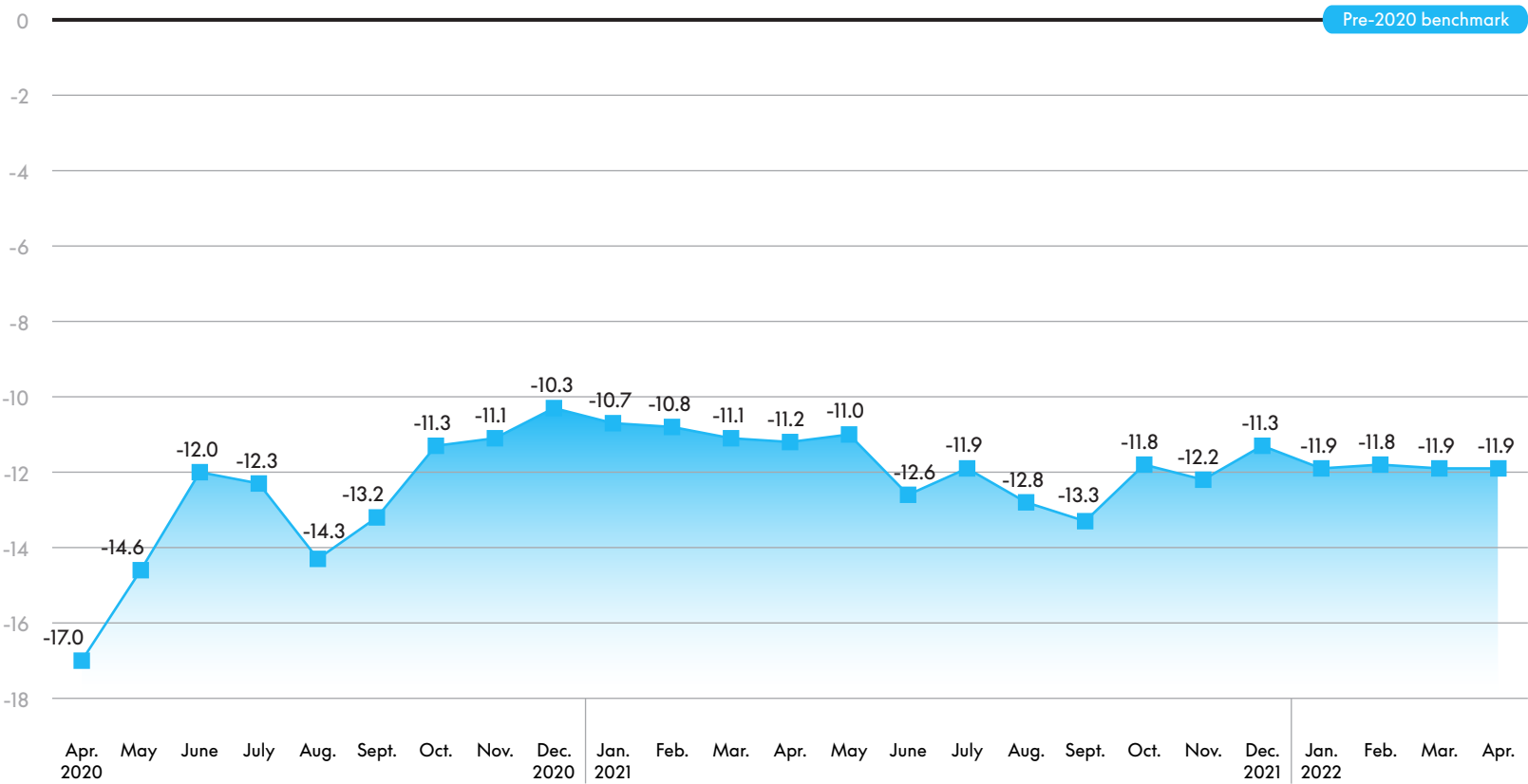
say the conflict in Ukraine is negatively impacting them

5. Nearly four in ten indicate that the conflict in Ukraine is impacting them personally.

- Those who indicate that the conflict is impacting them personally have the lowest mental health scores.
- 38% report the conflict in Ukraine is negatively impacting them.
- 38% are most concerned about long-term disruption and suffering of those involved.
- 29% are most concerned about the escalation and broadening of conflict.
- 20% are most concerned about the economic impact of the conflict in Ukraine.

The Mental Health Index™

The Mental Health Index™ (MHI) is a measure of deviation from the benchmark¹ of mental health and risk. **The overall Mental Health Index for April 2022 is -11.9 points, unchanged for four consecutive months.** A 12-point decrease from the pre-COVID-19 benchmark reflects a population whose mental health is similar to the most distressed one per cent of the benchmark population.



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

MHI Current Month
April 2022

-11.9

March 2022

-11.9

Mental Health Index™ sub-scores

The lowest Mental Health Index™ sub-score is for the risk measure of depression (-13.9), followed by anxiety (-13.3), isolation (-12.7), work productivity (-12.5), optimism (-10.8), and general psychological health (-4.7).

Despite a decline of 2.6 points from the prior month, the most favourable mental health sub-score, and the only measure above the historical benchmark, continues to be financial risk (1.0).

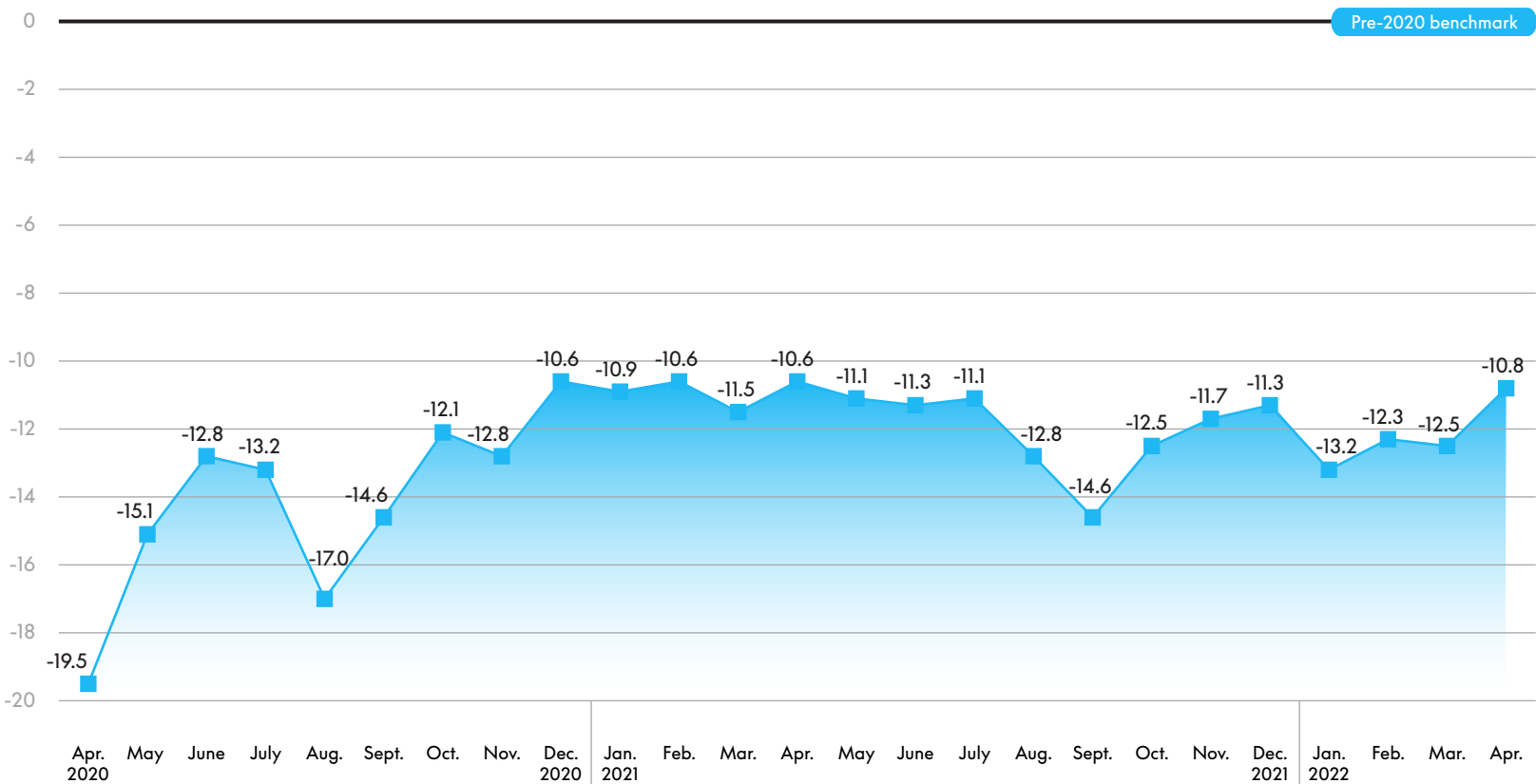
- Depression, anxiety, work productivity, and financial risk sub-scores have declined from March 2022.
- With a 1.7-point increase, the optimism sub-score had the greatest improvement over the prior month.
- The financial risk sub-score declined 2.6 points in April 2022; however, it continues to be the strongest of all sub-scores, at one point above the pre-2020 benchmark.

Mental Health Index™ Sub-scores ² 2022	April	March
Depression	-13.9	-12.8
Anxiety	-13.3	-12.9
Isolation	-12.7	-12.8
Work productivity	-12.5	-10.6
Optimism	-10.8	-12.5
Psychological health	-4.7	-6.1
Financial risk	1.0	3.6

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

Optimism

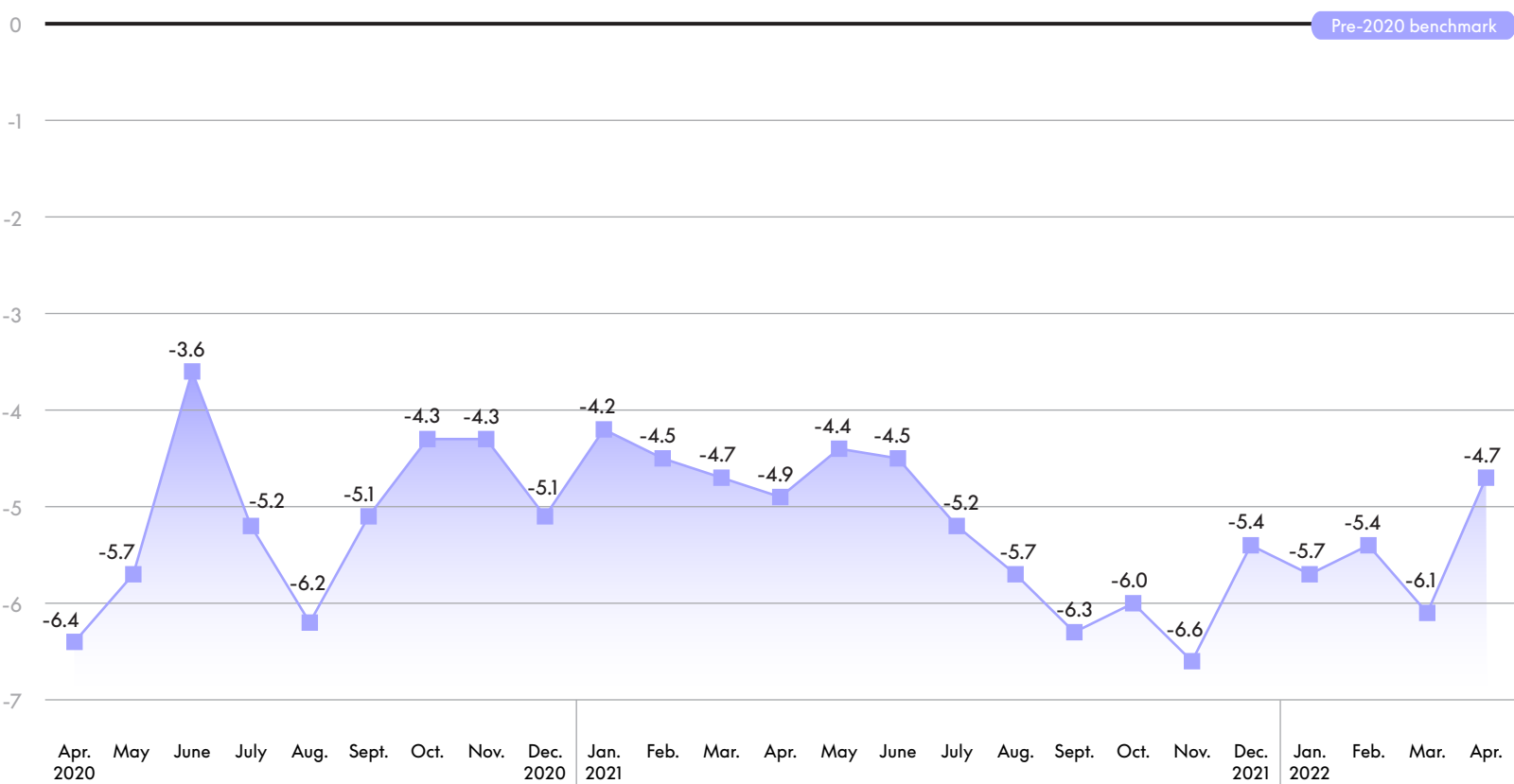
Since April 2020, optimism scores have remained significantly below the benchmark. After two months of significant decline in August and September 2021, the optimism score improved from October to December 2021. After falling nearly two points in January 2022, the score regained nearly one point in February 2022. After a modest decline in March, the score improved 1.7 points to -10.8, the highest level in nearly one year.



General psychological health

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

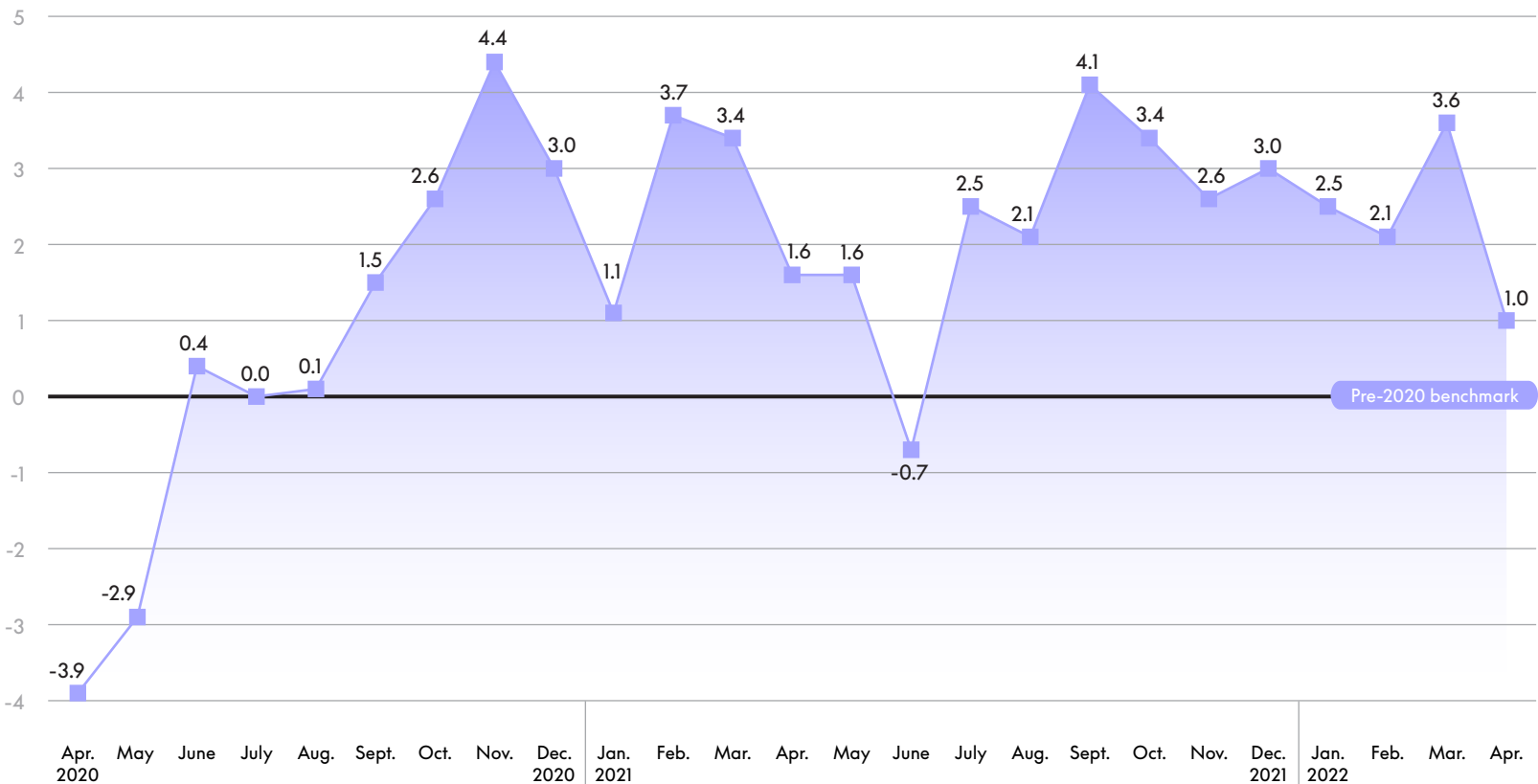
Since the launch of the MHI in April 2020, the general psychological health sub-score has fluctuated. Beginning in July 2021, a series of declines brought the score to a low of -6.5 in November 2021, a level not seen since April 2020. In December 2021, the general psychological health sub-score improved 1.2-points to -5.4, then fell modestly in January. The score recovered in February 2022 but declined in March to more than six points below the benchmark. In April 2022, the score improved by 1.4-points to -4.7, a level not seen in 10 months.



Financial risk

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

From April 2020 to November 2020, the financial risk of Australians showed improvement. The financial risk score declined sharply through January 2021 and recovered in February 2021. Since February, the score declined to -0.7, the lowest point in more than one year. The score rebounded and reached a near high in September 2021. The score fell through February 2022 but improved significantly in March. A sharp decline is observed in April 2022, falling to a level (1.0) not seen in 10 months. Despite this decline, the financial risk sub-score remains the strongest of all mental health sub-scores.



Demographics

- Since the launch of the MHI, women have had significantly lower mental health scores than men. In April 2022, the mental health score of women is -13.1 compared to -10.6 for men.
- Since April 2020, mental health scores have improved 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. More than two years later, this pattern continues with a lower score for those with at least one child (-13.1) than those without children (-11.3).

Employment

- Overall, five per cent of respondents are unemployed³ and 10 per cent report reduced hours or reduced salary.
- Managers (-11.5) have nearly equal mental health scores to non-managers (-11.6).
- Individuals working for employers with 5,001-10,000 employees have the highest mental health score (-9.0).
- Respondents working for companies with 51-100 employees have the lowest mental health score (-16.3).

Emergency savings

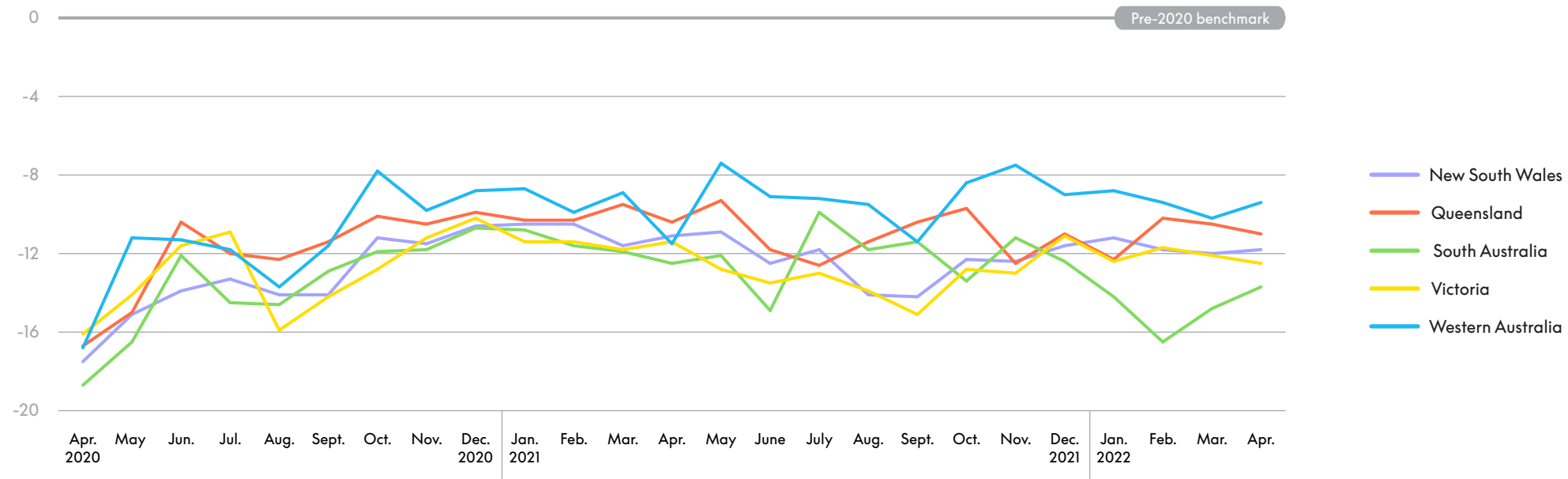
- Those without emergency savings continue to experience a lower mental health score (-25.7) than the overall group (-11.9). Individuals with emergency savings have a mental health score of -6.5.

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

Mental Health Index™ (regional)

Regional mental health scores since October 2020 have remained inconsistent. In April 2022, the mental health scores improved in South Australia, New South Wales, and Western Australia while the mental health score declined in Queensland and Victoria.

- Despite a 1.1-point improvement in April 2022, the mental health score in South Australia remains the lowest (-13.7).
- The mental health score in Western Australia improved nearly one point in April and continues to be strongest (-9.4) compared to other states.



Employment status	April 2022	March 2022
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	-10.1	-9.7
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	-22.8	-20.9
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	NA	-31.5
Not currently employed	-21.2	-22.9
Age group	April 2022	March 2022
Age 20-29	-20.3	-19.3
Age 30-39	-15.9	-16.3
Age 40-49	-13.4	-14.2
Age 50-59	-8.4	-9.8
Age 60-69	-6.4	-5.0
Number of children	April 2022	March 2022
No children in household	-11.3	-10.8
1 child	-13.3	-13.6
2 children	-12.9	-14.2
3 children or more	-13.3	-14.9

Region	April 2022	March 2022
New South Wales	-11.8	-12.0
Victoria	-12.5	-12.1
Queensland	-11.0	-10.5
South Australia	-13.7	-14.8
Western Australia	-9.4	-10.2
Gender	April 2022	March 2022
Men	-10.6	-9.5
Women	-13.1	-13.9
Household income	April 2022	March 2022
\$30K/annum	-24.9	-23.0
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	-16.0	-15.7
\$60k to <\$100K	-13.6	-13.1
\$100K to \$150K	-11.2	-10.2
\$150K and over	-5.3	-5.4

Employer size	April 2022	March 2022
Self-employed/sole proprietor	-15.1	-12.6
2-50 employees	-9.3	-9.5
51-100 employees	-16.3	-13.6
101-500 employees	-12.5	-12.2
501-1,000 employees	-10.9	-11.1
1,001-5,000 employees	-11.5	-11.6
5,001-10,000 employees	-9.0	-11.6
More than 10,000 employees	-9.7	-12.0
Manager	April 2022	March 2022
Manager	-11.5	-12.5
Non-manager	-11.6	-11.0

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)

The lowest mental health score in April 2022 is among individuals employed in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation have the lowest mental health score (-16.4), followed by those working in Administrative and Support services (-14.3).

Those employed in Manufacturing (-6.1), Public Administration (-6.5), and Wholesale Trade (-8.8) have the highest mental health scores this month.

Changes from the prior month are shown in the table.

Industry	April 2022	March 2022	Change
Wholesale Trade	-8.8	-15.3	6.5
Construction	-8.9	-12.2	3.3
Administrative and Support services	-14.3	-16.8	2.4
Public Administration	-6.5	-8.3	1.7
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	-11.0	-12.3	1.3
Retail Trade	-13.3	-13.0	-0.3
Other services (except Public Administration)	-14.3	-13.9	-0.4
Other	-13.2	-12.8	-0.4
Manufacturing	-6.1	-5.6	-0.5
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	-16.4	-15.2	-1.2
Educational Services	-13.2	-11.9	-1.3
Finance and Insurance	-11.7	-10.2	-1.5
Transportation and Warehousing	-9.6	-7.2	-2.3
Health Care and Social Assistance	-14.1	-11.7	-2.4

Spotlight

Pandemic impact on mental health

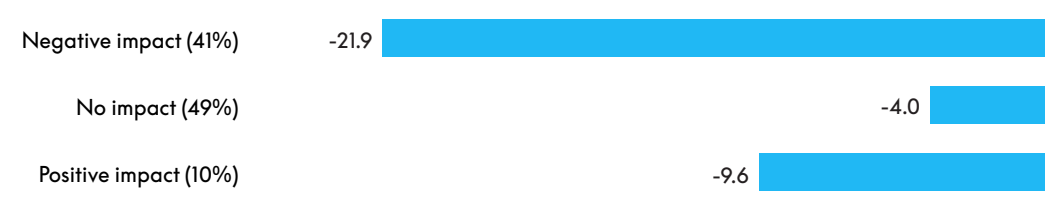
Australians were asked whether the pandemic has impacted their ongoing mental health.

- More than two in five working Australians (41 per cent) report the pandemic has had a negative impact on their ongoing mental health. This group has the lowest mental health score (-21.9), ten points below the national average (-11.9).
- Nearly half (49 per cent) report the pandemic has had no impact on their ongoing mental health, and this group has the highest mental health score (-4.0), eight points higher than the national average (-11.9).

The pandemic has impacted my ongoing mental health



MHI score by pandemic has impacted my ongoing mental health

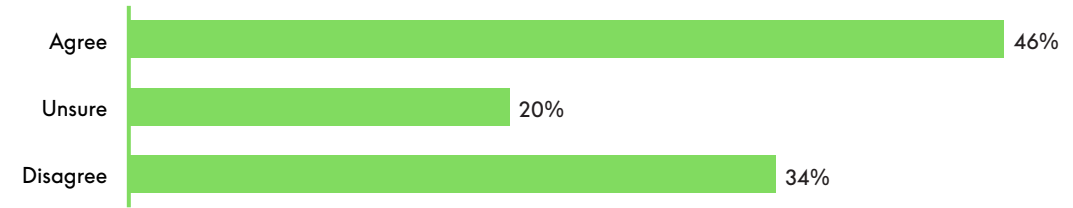


Stress

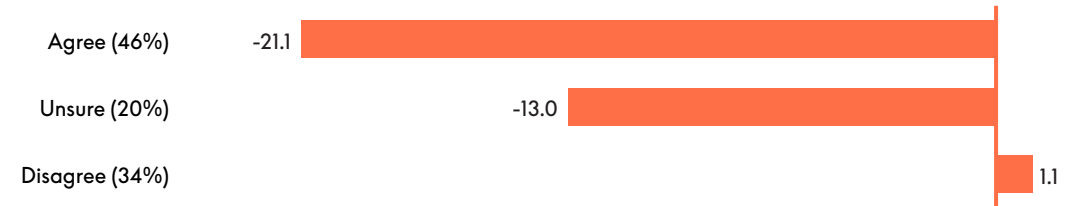
Australians were asked whether they are feeling more sensitive to stress compared to before the pandemic.

- Nearly half (46 per cent) are feeling more sensitive to stress compared to before the pandemic, and this group has the lowest mental health score (-21.1), more than nine points below the national average (-11.9).
- The highest mental health score (1.1) is among 34 per cent who do not feel more sensitive to stress compared to before the pandemic.
- Individuals employed with reduced salary or fewer hours are 50 per cent more likely to feel more sensitive to stress compared to before the pandemic.

I am feeling more sensitive to stress compared to before the pandemic



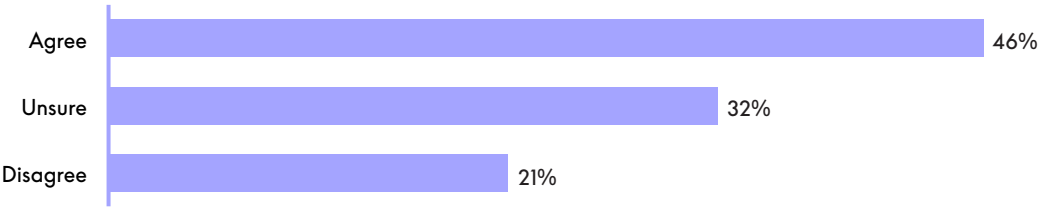
MHI score by I am feeling more sensitive to stress compared to before the pandemic



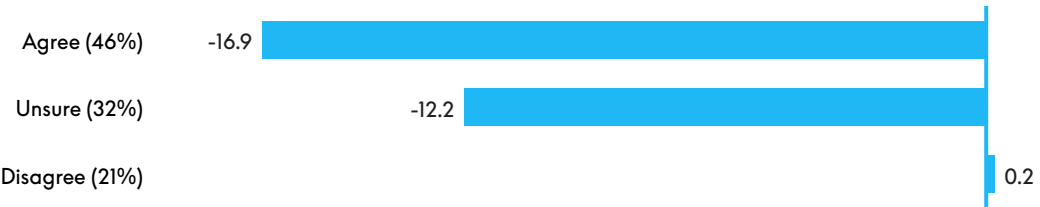
Australians were asked whether they notice their colleagues are more sensitive to stress compared to before the pandemic.

- Nearly half (46 per cent) notice their colleagues are more sensitive to stress compared to before the pandemic, and this group has the lowest mental health score (-16.9), five points below the national average (-11.9).

My colleagues are more sensitive to stress compared to before the pandemic



MHI score by my colleagues are more sensitive to stress compared to before the pandemic



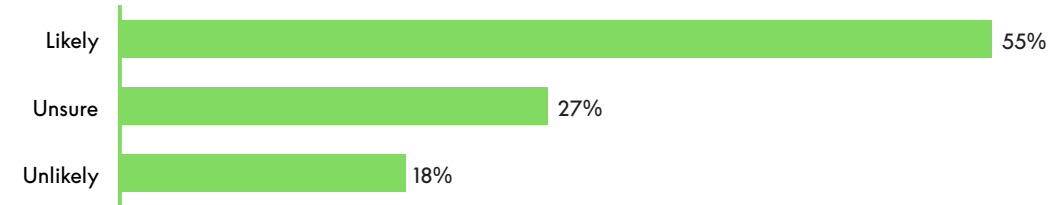
Professional support for mental health

Likelihood of reaching out for professional help

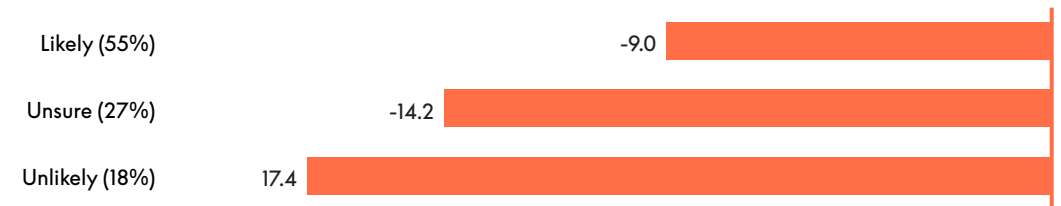
Australians were asked how likely they would be to reach out for professional help if they were struggling with stress or a mental health issue.

- More than half (55 per cent) are likely to reach out for professional help if struggling with stress or a mental health issue, and this group has the best mental health score (-9.0), nearly three points higher than the national average (-11.9).
- Nearly one in five (18 per cent) are unlikely to reach out for professional help if struggling with stress or a mental health issue, and this group has the lowest mental health score (-17.4), more than five points below the national average.

Likelihood of reaching out for professional help if struggling with stress or a mental health issue



MHI score by likelihood of reaching out for professional help if struggling with stress or a mental health issue

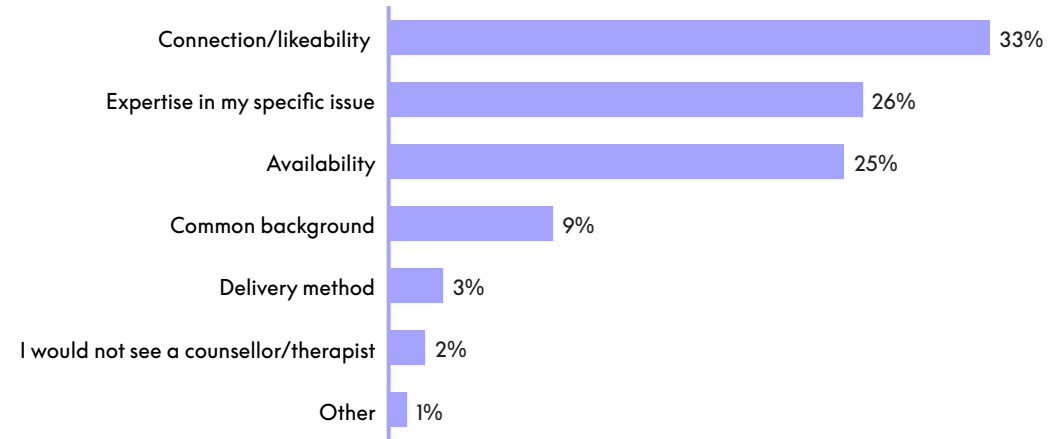


Most important factor in choosing a mental health professional

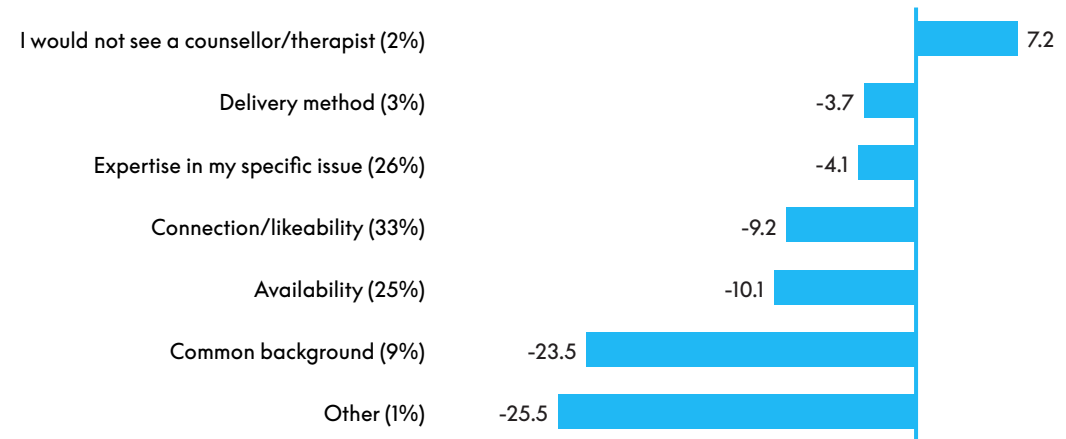
Australians who indicated that they would be likely to reach out for professional mental health support if struggling with stress or mental health challenges were asked about the most important factor (assuming the counsellor/therapist has appropriate experience) when choosing a mental health professional.

- Nearly one-third (33 per cent) indicate connection/likeability is the most important factor when choosing a mental health professional, followed by 28 per cent indicating expertise in their specific issue is the most important factor.
- Respondents older than 50 are 70 per cent more likely than respondents younger than 70 to indicate that expertise in their specific issue is the most important factor when choosing a mental health professional.
- Parents are three times as likely as non-parents to indicate common background is the most important factor when choosing a mental health professional.

Most important factor in choosing a mental health professional



MHI score by most important factor in choosing a mental health professional



Conflict in Ukraine

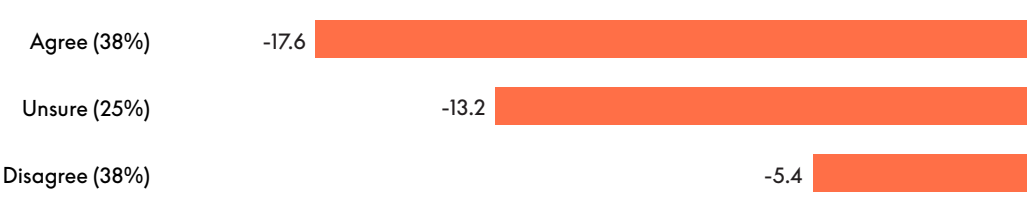
Australians were asked whether the conflict in Ukraine is negatively impacting them.

- Nearly four in ten (38 per cent) report the conflict in Ukraine is negatively impacting them, and this group has the lowest mental health score (-17.6), nearly six points below the national average (-11.9).

The conflict in Ukraine is negatively impacting me



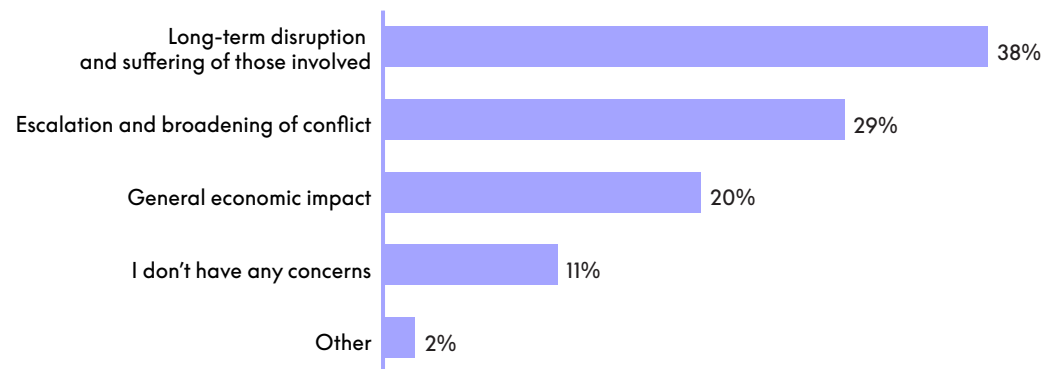
MHI score by the conflict in Ukraine is negatively impacting me



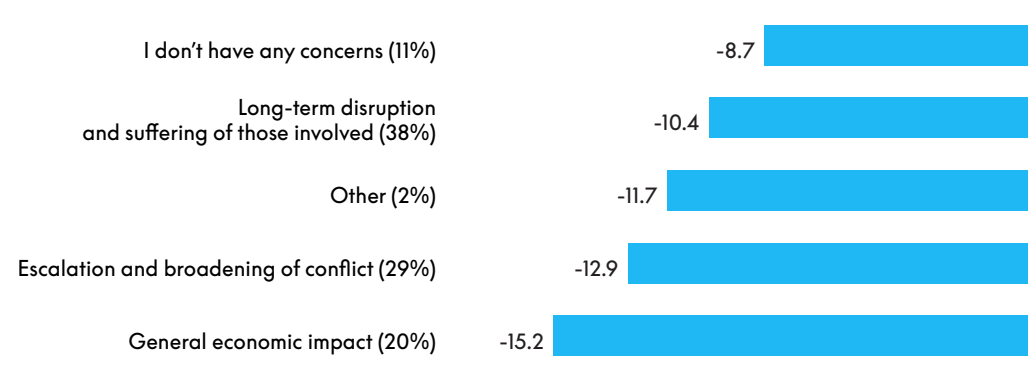
Australians were asked about their greatest concern regarding the conflict in Ukraine.

- Nearly two in five (38 per cent) report long-term disruption and suffering of those involved as their greatest concern, 29 per cent are most concerned about the escalation and broadening of conflict, and 20 per cent are most concerned about the general economic impact.

Greatest concern regarding the conflict in Ukraine



MHI score by greatest concern regarding the conflict in Ukraine



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 two 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 spotlight section that reflects the specific impact of current issues in the community.

Methodology

Data for this report is collected through an online survey of 1,000 people who live in Australia and are currently employed or who were employed within the prior six months. Participants are selected to be representative of the age, gender, industry, and geographic distribution in Australia. The same respondents take part each month to remove a sampling bias. Respondents are asked to consider the prior two weeks when answering each question. The Mental Health Index™ has been published monthly since April 2020. Benchmark data was collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Data for the current report was collected between April 7 and 22, 2022.

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.**

Additional data and analyses

Demographic breakdown of sub-scores, and specific cross-correlational and custom analyses, are available upon request. Benchmarking against the national results or any sub-group is available upon request. Contact MHI@lifeworks.com



About LifeWorks

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

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