The Mental Health Index by LifeWorks™

Australia | February 2022





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# The top 5 things you need to know for February 2022

- With no improvement from the prior month, the mental health of Australians remains nearly 12 points below the pre-2020 benchmark.
- The current score is -11.8 which is nearly unchanged from the previous month (-11.9).
- Depression, isolation, and financial risk scores declined from January to February 2022.
- The strongest sub-score continues to be financial risk, representing an improvement in the level of emergency savings compared to 2019.
- The mental health score in South Australia declined to its lowest level since May 2020.
- 2. More than two-thirds of Australians are comfortable with <u>less</u> social interaction than they had before the pandemic.
- 71% are comfortable going forward with less social interaction than before the pandemic and this group has a mental health score two points better than the national average.
- Those who are uncomfortable with less social interaction have a lower mental health score than the national average.
- Feeling valued, having control, doing work that is valued, and being accepted are each associated with better mental health.
- 66% feel valued for the work they do, while 17% do not, and 17% are unsure.
- The lowest mental health score (-34.5) is among those who do not believe they can be themselves at work.

- 82% believe the work they do is important to their employer.
- 71% are satisfied with the amount of control they have over their work.
- Younger employees are more likely to believe their work is <u>not</u> important to their employer.
- 4. More than half of Australians are, or possibly are, rethinking their career goals because of the pandemic.
- Younger people and managers are more likely to say that their career goals have changed because of the pandemic.
- 36% say their career goals have changed due to the pandemic and another 19% are unsure.
- 15% will make a career change because of the pandemic and another 21% are unsure.
- 31% are considering retraining for a different career.
- 24% are considering resigning and moving to a different role.
- 20% are considering starting their own business.
- Employees whose career goals have changed due to the pandemic and those who will be making a career change have lower mental health scores than the national average.
- 5. Higher rates of absenteeism are strongly correlated with poorer mental health.
- Employees with mental health scores more than 10 points above the pre-2020 benchmark had an average of 2.0 sick days in 2021.
- As absenteeism rates increase, mental health scores decrease.

71%

66%

are comfortable with **less** social interaction

feel valued by their employer

36%

say career goals have changed

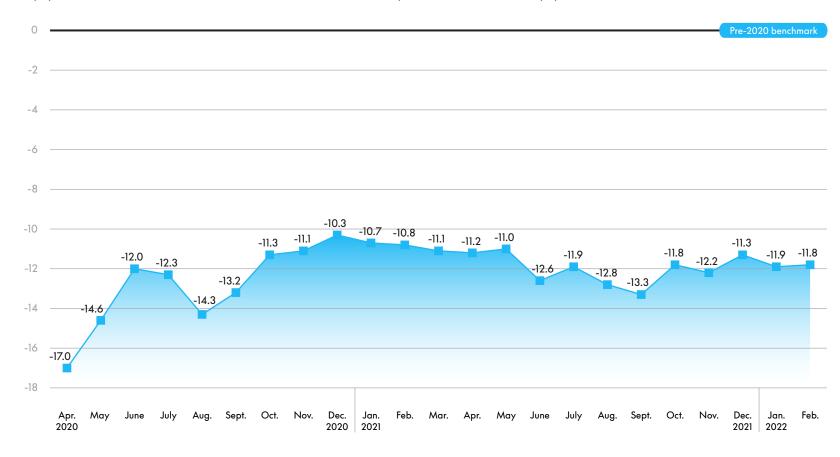
Lowest mental health scores

are among those who do not feel they can be themselves



# The Mental Health Index™

The Mental Health Index<sup>™</sup> (MHI) is a measure of deviation from the benchmark¹ of mental health and risk. **The overall**Mental Health Index for February 2022 is -11.8 points. A 12-point decrease from the pre-COVID-19 benchmark reflects a population whose mental health is similar to the most distressed one per cent of the benchmark population.



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



MHI Current Month February 2022

-11.8

January 2022

-11.9

#### Mental Health Index™ sub-scores

The lowest Mental Health Index<sup>™</sup> sub-score is for the risk measure of depression (-12.9), followed by anxiety (-12.5), isolation (-12.5), optimism (-12.3), work productivity (-10.8), and general psychological health (-5.4). The best sub-score, and the only measure above the historical benchmark, continues to be financial risk (2.1).

- Depression, isolation, and financial risk scores declined from January 2022 results.
- With a 0.9-point increase, the optimism score has had the greatest improvement from the prior month.
- Despite a 0.4-point decline, at 2.1-points above the pre-2020 benchmark, the financial risk score continues to be the strongest of all sub-scores.

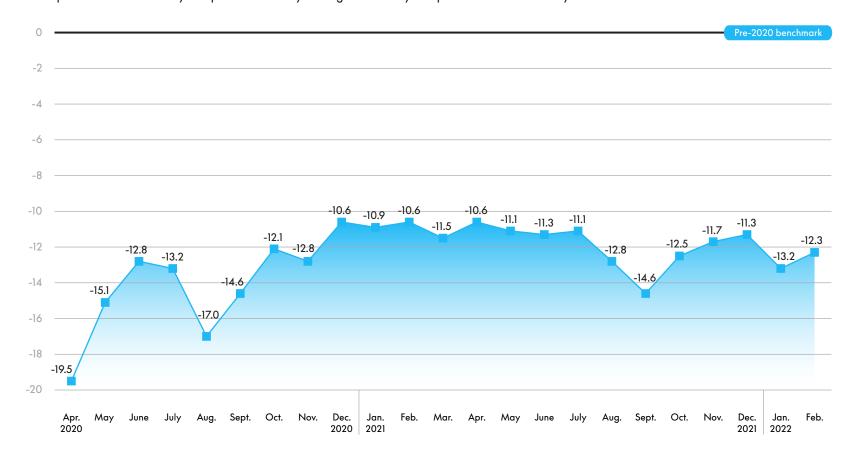
Mental Health Index <sup>™</sup> Sub-scores <sup>2</sup>	February 2022	January 2022
Depression	-12.9	-12.7
Anxiety	-12.5	-12.8
Isolation	-12.5	-12.1
Optimism	-12.3	-13.2
Work productivity	-10.8	-11.5
Psychological health	-5.4	-5.7
Financial risk	2.1	2.5

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



## **Optimism**

Since April 2020, optimism scores have remained significantly below the benchmark. Since December 2020, scores have fluctuated modestly through July 2021. After two months of significant decline in August and September, the optimism improved by 2.1 points to -12.5 in October. Three months of improvement followed to December 2021. The optimism score fell nearly two points in January but regained nearly one point to -12.3 in February 2022.



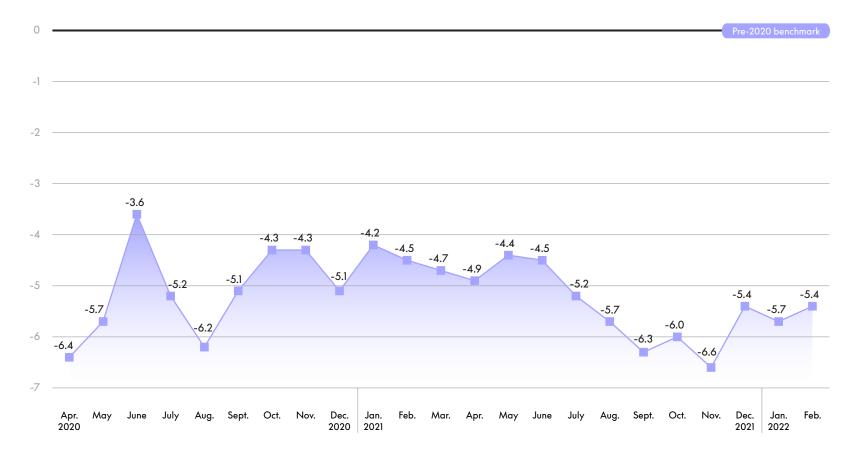


# General psychological health

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

Since the launch of the MHI in April 2020, the general psychological health score fluctuated from a low of -6.4 to a high of -3.6.

Since January 2021, scores have fluctuated modestly, however, in July 2021, a sharp decline was observed. After four months of significant decline the general psychological health of Australians improved modestly in October to 6.0 points below the pre-2020 benchmark but declined again in November. In December 2021, the general psychological health sub-score improved 1.2-points to -5.4, then fell modestly in January. In February 2022, the score recovered from the January decline to a score equal to December (-5.4).

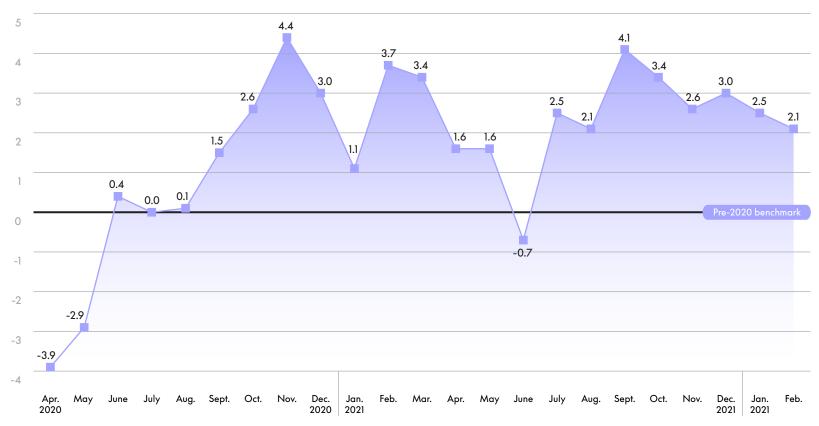




#### Financial risk

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

From April 2020 to November 2020, the financial risk of Australians showed improvement. The financial risk score declined sharply through January 2021 and recovered in February 2021. Since February, the financial risk scores declined to -0.7, the lowest in more than one year. In July, the financial risk score rebounded to 2.5, but fell modestly to 2.1 in August. In September 2021, a significant 2-point increase was observed reaching a near-high of 4.1 points. After two consecutive months of decline, the financial risk sub-score improved modestly to 3.0 points in December 2021. In both January and February 2022, the financial risk score declined and is currently at a level not seen since August 2021. Despite the decline, the financial risk of Australia continues to be the strongest of all sub-scores and remains above the pre-2020 benchmark.





### **Demographics**

- Since the launch of the MHI, women have had significantly lower mental health scores than men. In February 2022, the mental health score of women is -14.3 compared to -9.0 for men.
- In each of the past 23 months, mental health scores improve with age.
- Differences in mental health scores between those with and without children have been reported since the launch of the Index in April 2020. Nearly two years later, this pattern continues with a lower score for those with at least one child (-14.8) than those without children (-10.1).

## **Employment**

- Overall, five per cent of respondents are unemployed<sup>3</sup>
   and 14 per cent report reduced hours or reduced salary.
- Individuals reporting reduced salary compared to the prior month have the lowest mental health score (-26.5), followed by those reporting fewer hours (-21.1), and those not currently employed (-20.9).
- Managers have a lower mental health score (-12.6) than non-managers (-10.7).
- Individuals working for organizations with 2-50 employees have the highest mental health score (-8.3).
- Respondents working for companies with 1,001-5,000 employees have the lowest mental health score (-15.1).

Those without emergency savings continue to experience
a lower mental health score (-27.2) than the overall group (-11.8).
Individuals with emergency savings have a mental health
score of -5.7.

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

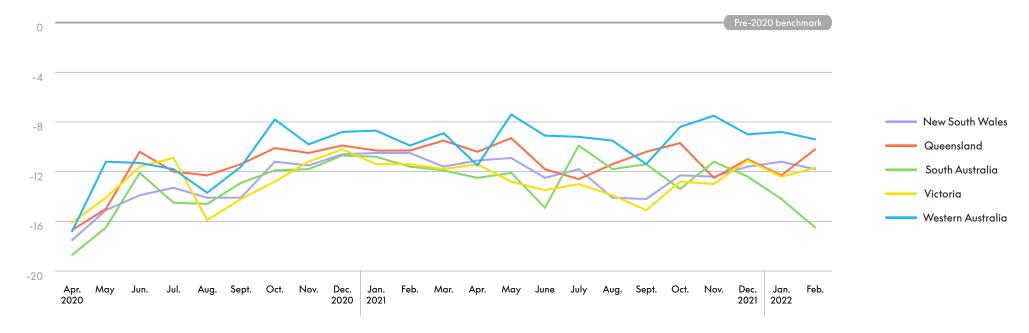


**Emergency savings** 

# Mental Health Index™ (regional)

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

- The mental health score in South Australia declined 2.3 points in February, bringing it to the lowest point since May 2020.
- Despite a 0.6-point decline, the mental health score in Western Australia remains strongest at -9.4.





Employment status	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	-9.4	-10.0
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	-21.1	-22.7
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	-26.5	-22.5
Not currently employed	-20.9	-13.4
Age group	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022
Age 20-29	-22.0	-21.7
Age 30-39	-16.6	-15.7
Age 40-49	-14.1	-13.5
Age 50-59	-9.4	-9.7
Age 60-69	-4.8	-5.9
Number of children	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022
No children in household	-10.1	-10.6
1 child	-14.3	-16.7
2 children	-15.1	-12.5
3 children or more	-16.2	-10.3

Region	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022
New South Wales	-11.8	-11.2
Victoria	-11.7	-12.4
Queensland	-10.2	-12.3
South Australia	-16.5	-14.2
Western Australia	-9.4	-8.8
Gender	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022
Men	-9.0	-8.3
Women	-14.3	-14.8
Household income	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022
\$30K/annum	-22.3	-22.6
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	-17.0	-19.4
\$60k to <\$100K	-13.3	-13.0
\$100K to \$150K	-10.3	-9.4
\$150K and over	-5.6	-5.6

Employer size	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022
Self-employed/sole proprietor	-12.8	-13.4
2-50 employees	-8.3	-10.0
51-100 employees	-13.4	-17.0
101-500 employees	-13.5	-12.0
501-1,000 employees	-9.9	-11.9
1,001-5,000 employees	-15.1	-10.4
5,001-10,000 employees	-14.9	-14.2
More than 10,000 employees	-8.5	-10.6
Manager	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022

Manager	160. 2022	Juli. 2022
Manager	-12.6	-12.9
Non-manager	-10.7	-11.3

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)

Individuals working in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation have the lowest mental health score (-15.9) in February 2022, followed by individuals working in Construction (-15.1), and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (-14.3).

Those employed in Public Administration (-7.1), Manufacturing (-8.5), and Finance and Insurance (-8.9) have the highest mental health scores this month.

Changes from the prior month are shown in the table.

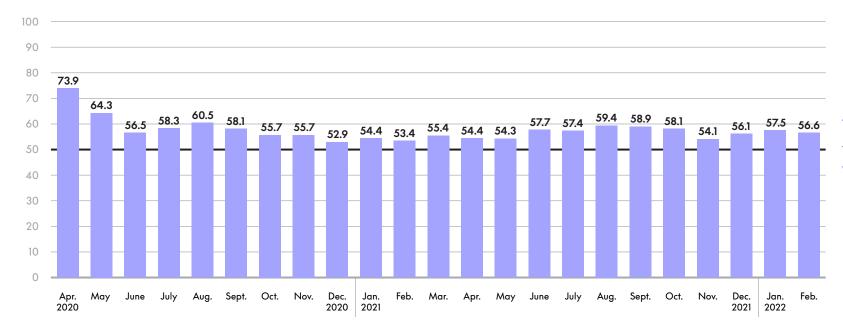
Industry	February 2022	January 2022	Change
Other services (except Public Administration)	-14.3	-20.2	5.9
Retail Trade	-13.2	-18. <i>7</i>	5.5
Food Services	-10.3	-14.3	4.0
Wholesale Trade	-10.5	-14.2	3.7
Administrative and Support services	-10.1	-13.2	3.2
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	-15.9	-19.1	3.1
Educational Services	-10.9	-13.1	2.2
Public Administration	-7.1	-8.7	1.6
Finance and Insurance	-8.9	-10.3	1.4
Manufacturing	-8.5	-7.7	-0.7
Health Care and Social Assistance	-12.2	-10.7	-1.5
Other	-12.9	-11.0	-1.9
Construction	-15.1	-11.4	-3.8
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	-14.3	-9.9	-4.4
Transportation and Warehousing	-12.8	-6.8	-6.0



# 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 2022 is 56.6.** This reflects a net increase in mental stress compared to the prior month.

The current score indicates that 21 per cent of the population is experiencing more mental stress compared to the prior month, with eight per cent experiencing less. A continued increase in mental stress since April 2020 indicates a significant accumulation of strain in the Australian population.



MStressChg Current Month— February 2022

56.6

MStressChg January 2022

57.5

More mental stress

50 = No change from prior month

Less mental stress



# Mental Stress Change (percentages)

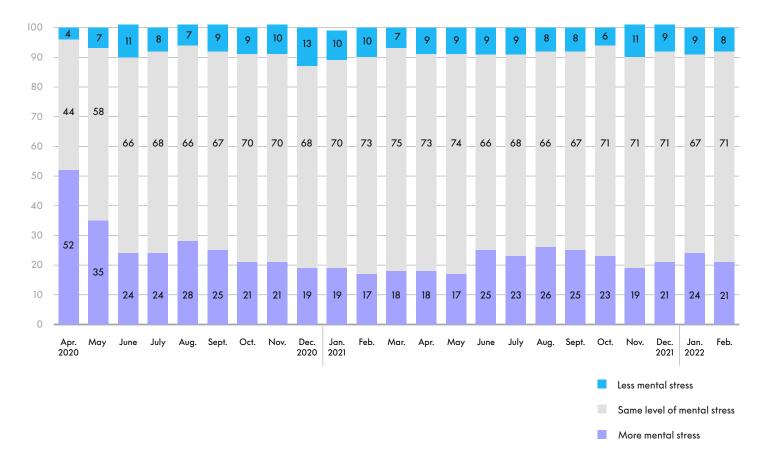
Mental Stress Change tracks stress changes each month.

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

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

In April 2020, 52 per cent of individuals reported an increase in mental stress. The number of respondents reporting increased month-over-month mental stress is 21 per cent in February 2022, while 71 per cent of respondents report the same level of mental stress and eight per cent report a decrease in mental stress.

#### Mental Stress Change by month





### **Demographics**

- Since the launch of the MHI in April 2020, younger people
  have experienced a greater increase in mental stress month
  over month compared to older respondents.
- Since April 2020, women have had larger increases in mental stress compared to men. In February 2022, the mental stress change score for women is 57.8 compared to 55.2 for men.

## Geography

 The greatest increase in month-over-month stress is for respondents living in South Australia (60.4), followed by New South Wales (58.1), Victoria (56.0), Western Australia (54.8), and Queensland (53.2).

## **Employment**

- The greatest increase in mental stress is seen in employed people with reduced hours (61.2), followed by unemployed people (57.7), employed people with no change to salary or hours (55.9), and employed people with reduced salary (55.4).
- Managers have a greater increase in mental stress (58.2) than non-managers (55.4).



Employment status	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	55.9	56.8
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	61.2	62.4
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	55.4	56.6
Not currently employed	57.7	59.4
Age group	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022
Age 20-29	61.4	56.8
Age 30-39	59.4	60.8
Age 40-49	58.7	59.6
Age 50-59	56.1	56.8
Age 60-69	50.5	53.2
Number of children	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022
No children in household	55.1	56.1
1 child	60.3	62.6
2 children	58.8	58.7
3 children or more	54.2	52.9

Region	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022
New South Wales	58.1	58.2
Victoria	56.0	57.9
Queensland	53.2	55.3
South Australia	60.4	59.1
Western Australia	54.8	56.9
Gender	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022
Men	55.2	55.1
Women	57.8	59.4
Household income	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022
\$30K/annum	61.4	52.7
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	56.6	62.4
\$60k to <\$100K	57.4	57.4
\$100K to \$150K	55.9	55.7
\$150K and over	56.8	57.5

Employer size	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022
Self-employed/sole proprietor	53.8	56.2
2-50 employees	52.7	55.2
51-100 employees	55.9	63.5
101-500 employees	60.7	57.6
501-1,000 employees	55.7	57.0
1,001-5,000 employees	60.6	55.3
5,001-10,000 employees	58.7	60.8
More than 10,000 employees	57.1	59.1

Manager	Feb. 2022	Jan. 2022
Manager	58.2	58.8
Non-manager	55.4	56.8

Numbers highlighted in orange are the most negative scores in the group.

Numbers highlighted in green are the least negative scores in the group.

## Available upon request:

Specific cross-correlational and custom analyses



# The Mental Stress Change (industry)

In February 2022, individuals employed in Construction (51.1), Transportation and Warehousing (51.2), and Finance and Insurance (54.1) have the lowest increases in mental stress.

Individuals working in Professional, Scientific and Technical Services have the most significant increase in mental stress (59.2), followed by individuals employed in Retail Trade (58.3).

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

Industry	February 2022	January 2022
Construction	51.1	63.5
Transportation and Warehousing	51.2	57.3
Finance and Insurance	54.1	52.8
Public Administration	54.5	55.2
Administrative and Support services	54.5	51.0
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	55.8	66.7
Food Services	56.0	54.5
Wholesale Trade	56.3	55.8
Health Care and Social Assistance	56.4	58.7
Educational Services	57.1	55.7
Manufacturing	57.3	55.5
Other services (except Public Administration)	58.0	65.2
Retail Trade	58.3	63.5
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	59.2	58.2
Other	59.4	54.2



# Spotlight

# Feeling valued

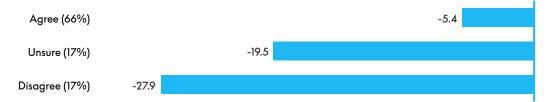
Australians were asked whether they feel valued for the work they do at their organization.

- Nearly two-thirds (66 per cent) feel valued for the work they do, and this group has the highest mental health score (-5.4), over six points better than the national average (-11.8).
- The lowest mental health score (-27.9) is among 17 per cent who do not feel valued for the work they do;16 points below the Australian average (-11.8).
- Those without emergency savings are more than 80 per cent more likely than those with emergency savings to not feel valued for the work they do.

#### I feel valued for the work I do



## MHI score by feeling valued for the work I do





# Value of work to my employer

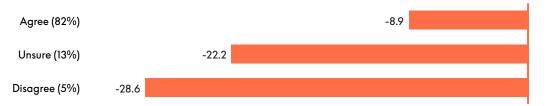
Australians were asked whether the work they do is important to their employer.

- More than four in five (82 per cent) believe the work they
  do is important to their employer and this group has the highest
  mental health score (-8.9).
- The lowest mental health score (-28.6) is among five per cent who believe their work is not important to their employer, nearly 17 points below the national average (-11.8).
- Individuals 50 years and younger are more than twice as likely as those 50 and older to believe their work is not important to their employer.

#### The work I do is important to my employer



#### MHI score by the work I do is important to my employer





# Control

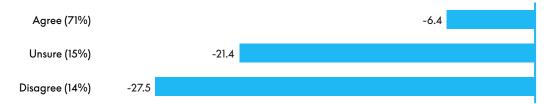
Australians were asked whether they are satisfied with the amount of control they have over their work.

- Nearly three-quarters (71 per cent) are satisfied with the amount
  of control they have over their work, and this group has the highest
  mental health score (-6.4), five points better than the national
  average (-11.8).
- The lowest mental health score (-27.5) is among 14 per cent who are dissatisfied with the amount of control they have over their work, nearly 16 points below the Australian average (-11.8).
- Non-managers are 60 per cent more likely than managers to be dissatisfied with the amount of control they have over their work.

#### I am satisfied with the amount of control over my work



#### MHI score by I am satisfied with the amount of control over my work





# Being myself at work

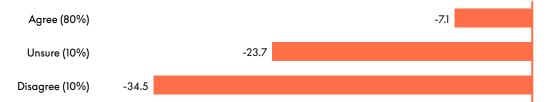
Australians were asked whether they are comfortable being themselves at work.

- Four in five (80 per cent) are comfortable being themselves at work, and this group has the highest mental health score (-7.1), five points above the national average (-11.8).
- The lowest mental health score (-34.5) is observed among ten per cent who are not comfortable being themselves at work, nearly 23 points below the Australian average (-11.8).
- Individuals under 50 are twice as likely as those 50 and older not feeling comfortable being themselves at work.
- Individuals without emergency savings are two-and-a-half times more likely than those with emergency savings not feeling comfortable being themselves at work.

#### I am comfortable being myself at work



#### MHI score by I am comfortable being myself at work



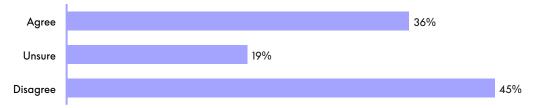


# Career goals

Australians were asked whether their career goals have changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Nearly half (45 per cent) report their career goals have not changed due to the pandemic and this group has the highest mental health score (-4.6), seven points better than the national average (-11.8).
- More than one-third (36 per cent) indicate their career goals
  have changed and this group has the lowest mental health
  score (-19.1), seven points below the Australian average (-11.8).
- Managers are 45 per cent more likely than non-managers to indicate their career goals have changed because of the pandemic.
- Individuals 40 and younger are 65 per cent more likely to report their career goals have changed than those 50 and older.
- Employed Australians with reduced salary or fewer hours are 80 per cent more likely than those with no changes to salary or hours to indicate their career goals have changed due to the pandemic.

#### My career goals have changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic



#### MHI score by my career goals have changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic





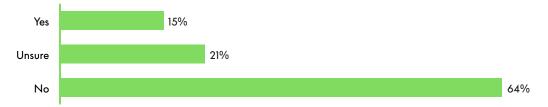
# Career change

### Career change due to the pandemic

Australians were asked whether they will be making a career change because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) will not be making a career change because of the pandemic and this group has the highest mental health score (-7.2).
- Fifteen per cent will make a career change because of the pandemic and this group has the lowest mental health score (-20.8), more than nine points below the national average (-11.8).
- Managers are nearly 70 per cent more likely than non-managers to report they will be making a career change because of the pandemic.

#### Will you be making a career change because of the COVID-19 pandemic?



#### MHI score by making a career change because of the pandemic





## Career change unrelated to the pandemic

Australians who reported that they are unsure or are not making a change to their career because of the COVID-19 pandemic were asked whether they are considering a change for another reason.

- More than two-thirds (70 per cent) will not be making changes to their career, and this group has the highest mental health score (-6.6), five points better than the national average (-11.8).
- Ten per cent plan to make changes to their career and this group has a mental health score (-21.5), nearly ten points lower than the Australian average (-11.8).

#### Will you be making a change to your career unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic?



#### MHI score by making a change unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic



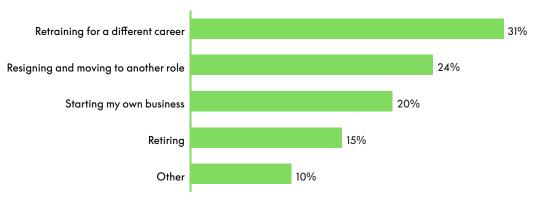


# Career changes being considered

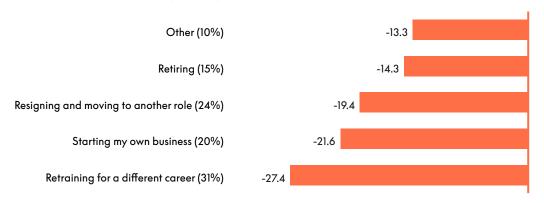
Australians considering a career change either because of the COVID-19 pandemic or unrelated to the pandemic were asked what change they are considering.

- Nearly one-third (31 per cent) are considering retraining for a different career. This group has the lowest mental health score (-27.4), more than 15 points below the national average (-11.8).
- Fifteen per cent are considering retiring and this group has the second highest mental health score (-14.3).
- Managers are four times more likely than non-mangers to consider starting their own business.
- Parents are twice as likely as non-parents to consider retraining for a different career.

#### Career change being considered



#### MHI score by career change being considered





# Social interaction

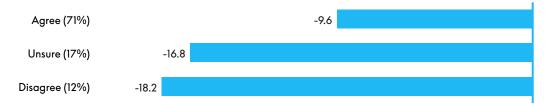
Australians were asked whether they are comfortable going forward with less social interaction than they had before the pandemic.

- Nearly three-quarters (71 per cent) are comfortable going forward with less social interaction than they had before the pandemic. This group has the highest mental health score (-9.6), two points better than the national average (-11.8).
- Twelve per cent are not comfortable having less social interaction than they had before the pandemic. This group has the lowest mental health score (-18.2).

#### I am comfortable with less social interaction than before the pandemic



#### MHI score by comfort with less social interaction than before the pandemic

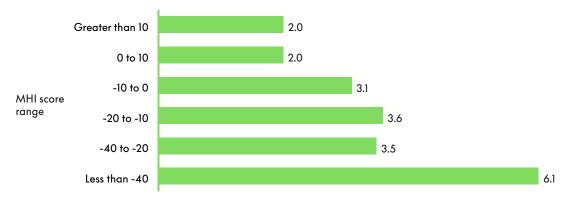




# Absenteeism

Australians were asked how many days they have missed in the past 12 months due to illness. The data shows a correlation between sick days and mental health scores. Those with higher absenteeism have lower mental health scores than those with fewer days lost due to illness.

### Average days absent in 2021 by MHI score





# Overview of the Mental Health Index by LifeWorks™

The mental health and wellbeing of a population is essential to overall health and work productivity. The Mental Health Index™ provides a measure of the current mental health status of employed adults in each geography compared to benchmarks collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The increases and decreases in the MHI are intended to predict cost and productivity risks and inform the need for investment in mental health support by business and government.

# The Mental Health Index™ report has three parts:

- The overall Mental Health Index<sup>™</sup> (MHI), which is a measure of change compared to the benchmark of mental health and risk.
- 2. A Mental Stress Change (MStressChg) score, which measures the level of reported mental stress compared to the prior month.
- 3. A spotlight section that reflects the specific impact of current issues in the community.

# Methodology

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

take part each month to remove a sampling bias. Respondents are asked to consider the prior two weeks when answering each question. The Mental Health Index<sup>™</sup> has been published monthly since April 2020. Benchmark data was collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Data for the current report was collected between February 1 and 8, 2022.

#### **Calculations**

To create the Mental Health Index<sup>™</sup>, the first step leverages a response scoring system turning individual responses to each question into a point value. Higher point values are associated with better mental health and less mental health risk. Everyone's scores are added and then divided by a total number of possible points to get a score out of 100. The raw score is the mathematical mean of the individual scores.

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

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

The range is from zero to 100. A succession of scores over 50, month over month, reflects high risk.

# Additional data and analyses

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





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