

# The Mental Health Index by LifeWorks™

Australia | June 2022



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# What you need to know for June 2022

## 1. The mental health of working Australians improved notably in June 2022.

- At 64.3, the mental health of Australians increased by 1.5 points from April 2022.
- 35% of working Australians have a high mental health risk, 39% have a moderate mental health risk, and 26% have a low mental health risk.
- All mental health sub-scores except optimism have improved from the prior period.
- Mental health scores improved in all regions apart from Western Australia.

## 2. Only ten per cent of working Australians believe that people with mental health conditions are not treated differently.

- 87% believe mental health conditions can be treated.
- 30% do not feel comfortable talking about mental health with their manager.
- 29% do not feel comfortable talking about mental health with colleagues.

- 17% do not feel comfortable talking about mental health with friends and family.

- Those who are comfortable speaking about mental health have higher mental health scores.

## 3. Australians who felt their mental wellbeing was supported by their employer during the pandemic have among the highest mental health scores.

- The mental health score of those who felt supported by their employer during the pandemic is nearly eight points higher than the national average and nearly 17 points higher than those who did not feel that their mental health was supported by their employer.
- 53% of employers whose employees felt supported offered work flexibility.
- 35% of employers whose employees felt supported promoted services and resources for mental health.
- 28% of employers whose employees felt supported offered days off to take care of mental health.

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From April 2020 to April 2022

the Mental Health Index by

LifeWorks™ reflected the deviation

from the pre-pandemic benchmark

data collected from 2017-2019.

Going forward, scores will be reported as absolute on a scale of 0-100 where

**0-49 = Distressed**

**50-79 = Strained**

**and 80-100 = Optimal**

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#### 4. Levels of personal and work stress are equal among working Australians.

- 31% indicate that volume of work is the source of their work stress.
- The impact of stress includes the following: 32% are having difficulty sleeping, 31% are unable to relax, 25% have experienced reduced energy, and 25% have experienced emotional changes.
- Personal and/or work stress is having a greater impact on younger people (under 40) than other groups.

#### 5. More than half of Australians experienced some benefit because of the pandemic.

- 18% have an improved financial position.
- 15% have an improved relationship with their partner.
- 15% have an improved relationship with their children.
- 15% prioritized physical health.

72%

are feeling  
the impact of work  
and/or personal stress

46%

feel that their mental  
wellbeing was supported  
by their employer during  
the pandemic

30%

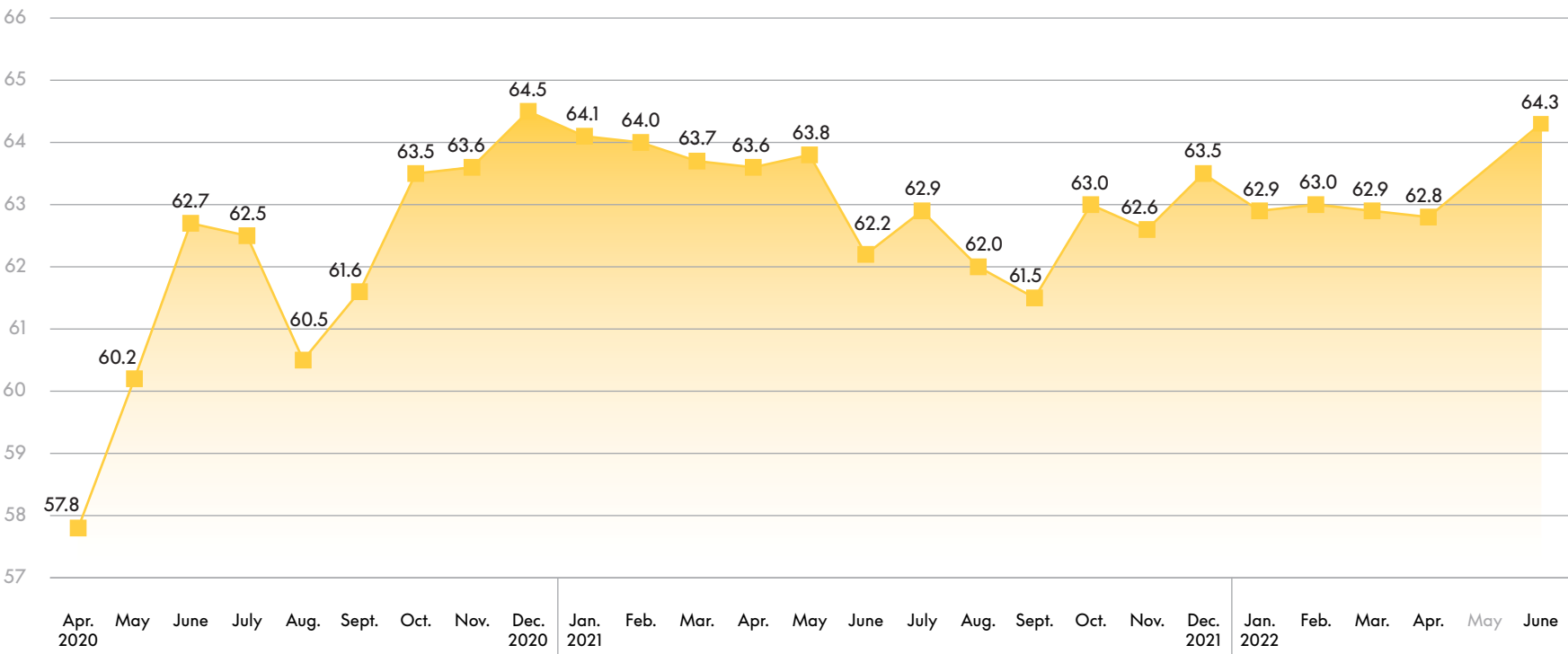
do not feel comfortable  
talking about mental health  
with their manager

10%

believe that people  
with mental health conditions  
are not treated differently

# The Mental Health Index™

The overall Mental Health Index for June 2022 is 64.3 points<sup>1</sup>.  
A notable 1.5-point improvement is observed after four months of static scores.



MHI Current Month  
June 2022

64.3

May 2022

62.8

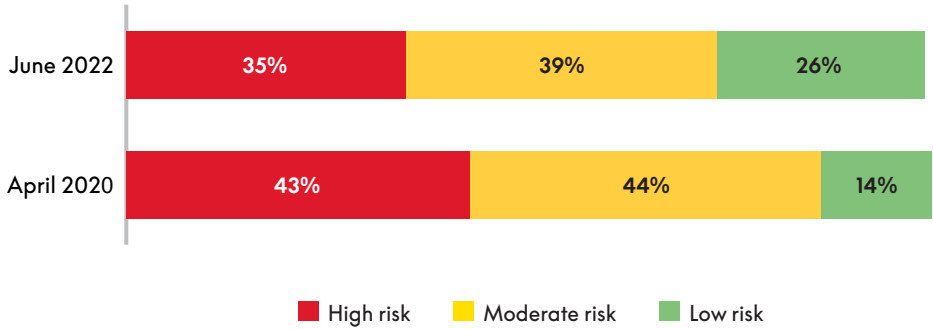
- Distressed 0-49
- Strained 50-79
- Optimal 80-100

<sup>1</sup> Beginning in June 2022, corresponding to year 3 of the Mental Health Index by LifeWorks™, scores are represented as absolute. The move to absolute scores has been taken given the degree of change that has occurred over the last two years. It is unlikely that a return to pre-pandemic levels will be realized hence the reference relative to that benchmark is no longer relevant.

# Mental health risk

In June 2022, 35 per cent of Australians have a high mental health risk, 39 per cent have a moderate mental health risk, and 26 per cent have a low mental health risk. Approximately 30 per cent of people in the high-risk group report diagnosed anxiety or depression, seven per cent report diagnosed anxiety or depression in the moderate-risk group, and one per cent of people in the low-risk group report diagnosed anxiety or depression.

In contrast, in April 2020, at the launch of the Index and near the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 43 per cent of Australians had a high mental health risk, 44 per cent had a moderate mental health risk, and 14 per cent had a low mental health risk.



## Mental Health Index™ sub-scores

The lowest Mental Health Index™ sub-score is for the risk measure of anxiety (57.5), followed by isolation (59.3), work productivity (62.5), depression (62.8), optimism (66.4), and financial risk (70.1). General psychological health (70.9) is the most favourable mental health measure in June 2022.

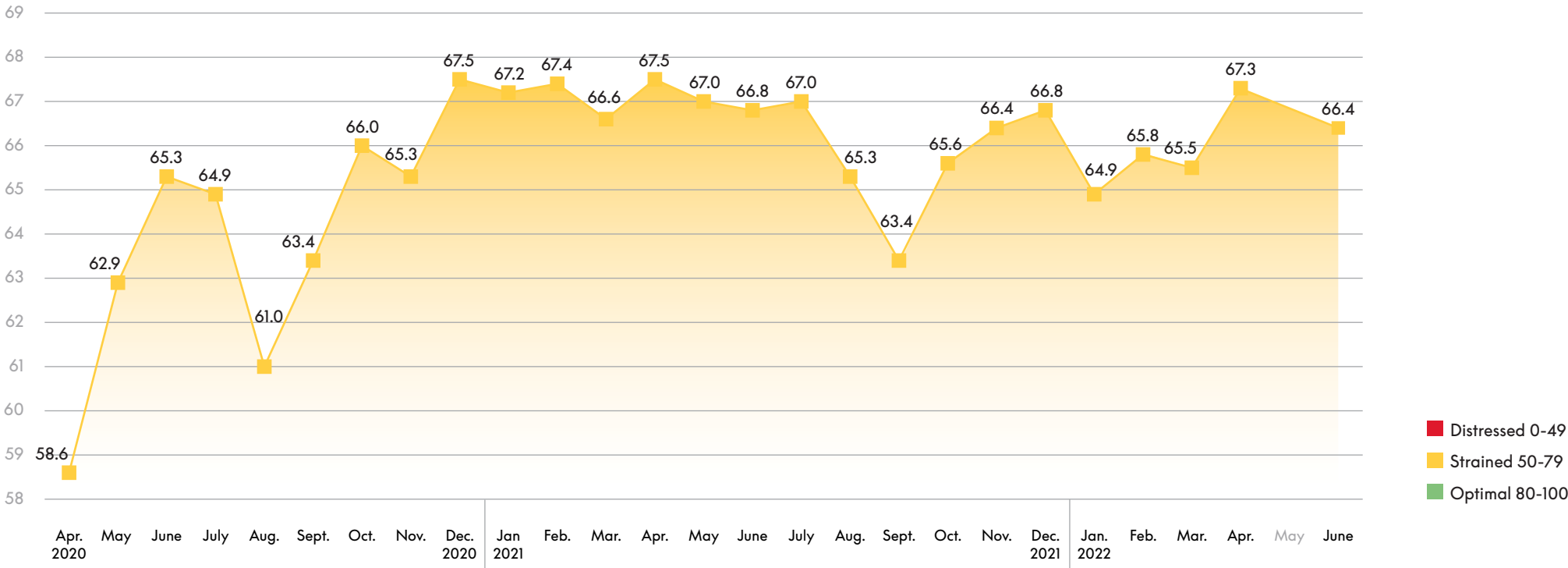
- All mental health sub-scores apart from optimism have improved compared to the prior period.
- With a 3.1-point increase, the work productivity sub-score has seen the greatest improvement over the prior period.

Mental Health Index™ Sub-scores <sup>2</sup> 2022	June	May
Anxiety	57.5	54.9
Isolation	59.3	58.1
Work productivity	62.5	59.4
Depression	62.8	59.9
Optimism	66.4	67.3
Financial risk	70.1	67.3
Psychological health	70.9	70.8

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

# Optimism

Since April 2020, the optimism sub-score has generally followed an increasing trend despite a few months of declines. In June 2022, the optimism score is the only mental health sub-score to have declined, albeit modestly, to 66.4.



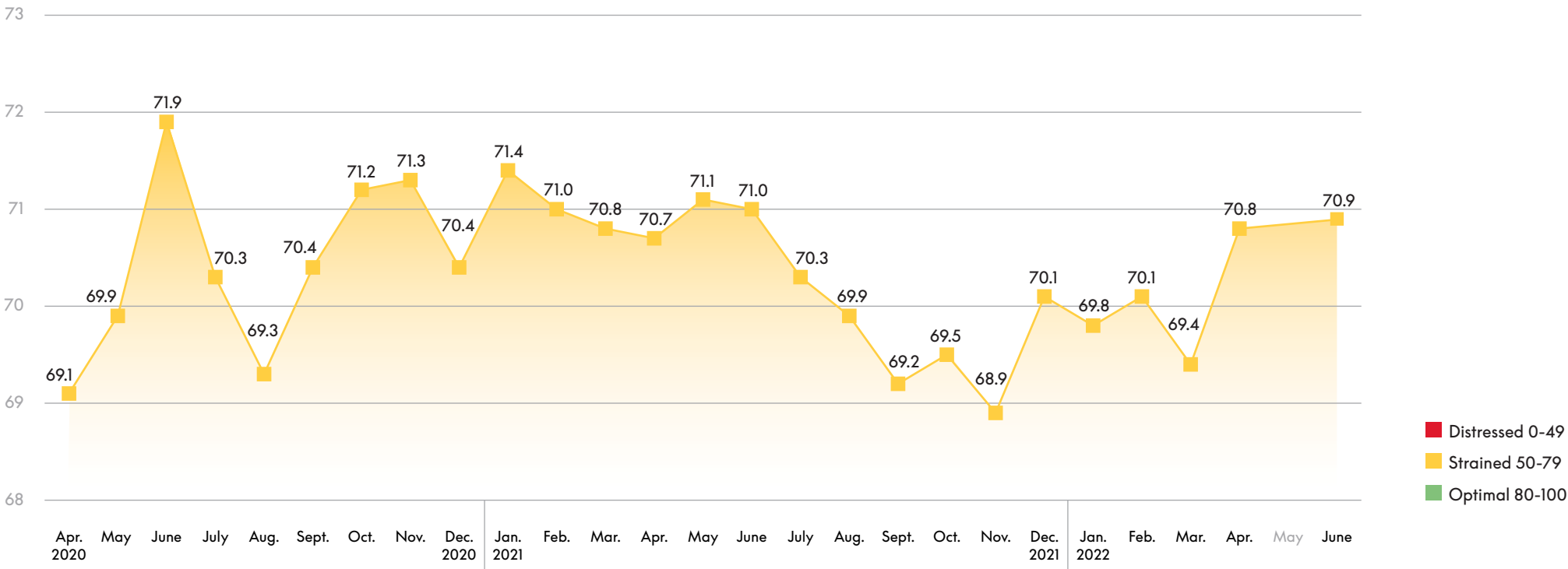


# General psychological health

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.

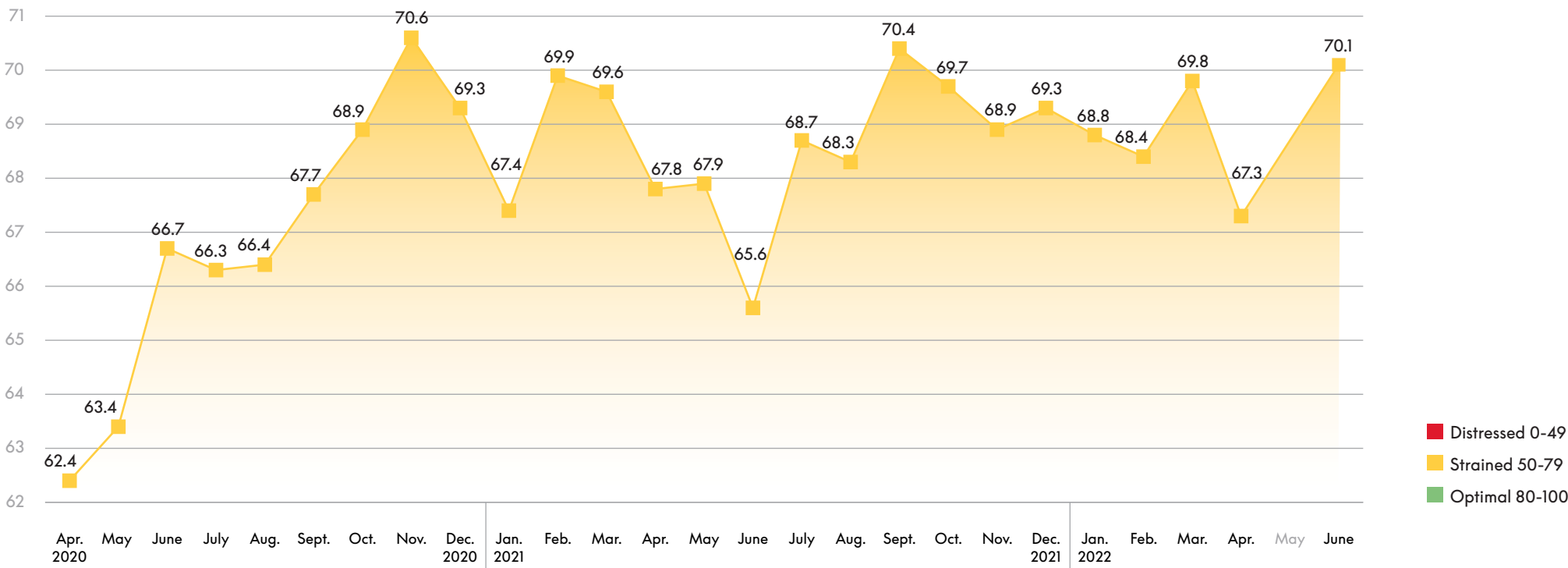
In June 2022, the score remains nearly equal to the prior period and is the strongest of all mental health sub-scores.



# Financial risk

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

The financial risk score of Australians followed an increasing trend from April 2020 to November 2020 followed by periods of variability. In June 2022, a significant 2.8 point improvement is observed from the prior period, raising the score to a level not seen in eight months.



## Demographics

- Since the launch of the MHI, women have had significantly lower mental health scores than men. In June 2022, the mental health score of women is 62.3 compared to 66.6 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 (62.4) than those without children (65.3).

## Employment

- Overall, six per cent of respondents are unemployed<sup>3</sup> and nine per cent report reduced hours or reduced salary.
- Individuals working fewer hours have the lowest mental health score (52.9), followed by those not currently employed (56.4), those with reduced salary compared to the prior period (56.7), and those with no change to salary or hours (65.8).
- Managers (64.4) and non-managers (64.7) have nearly equal mental health scores.
- Individuals who are self-employed have the lowest mental health score (59.1)
- Respondents working for companies with 5,001-10,000 employees have the highest mental health score (67.0).

## Emergency savings

- Those without emergency savings continue to experience a lower mental health score (49.1) than the overall group (64.3). Individuals with emergency savings have a mental health score of 69.6.

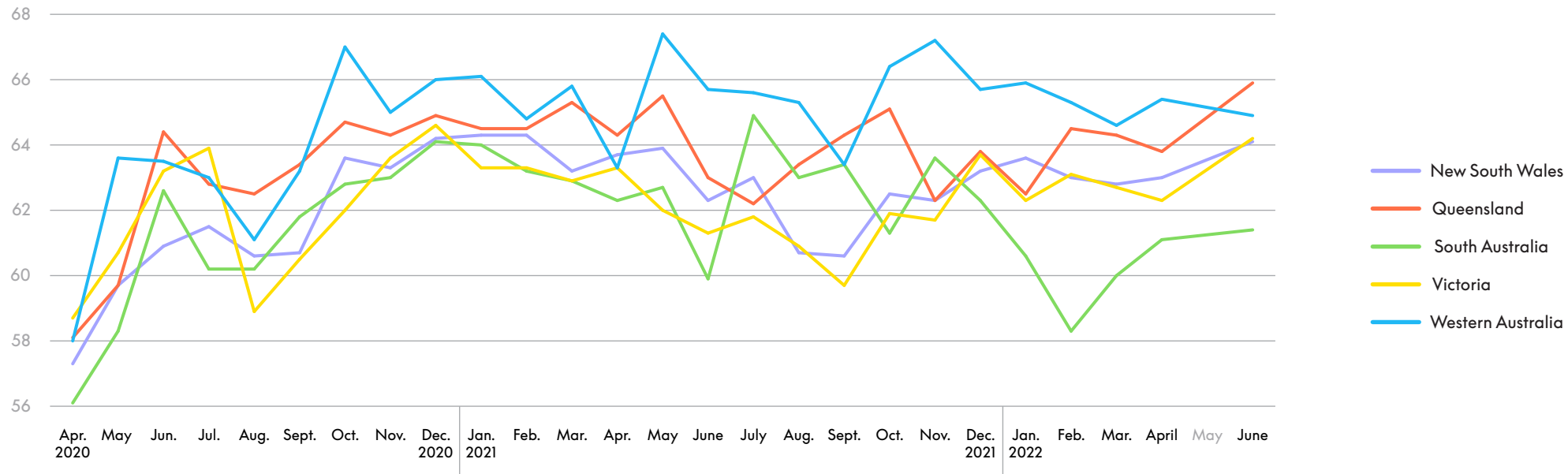
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3 MHI respondents who have been employed in the past six months are included in the poll.

# Mental Health Index™ (regional)

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

- Despite a modest improvement in June 2022, the mental health score in South Australia remains the lowest (61.4).
- The mental health score in Queensland improved 2.2 points and is strongest (65.9) compared to other states.



Employment status	June 2022	May 2022
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	65.8	64.7
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	52.9	52.0
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	56.7	NA
Not currently employed	56.4	53.6
Age group	June 2022	May 2022
Age 20-29	57.4	54.5
Age 30-39	60.7	58.9
Age 40-49	60.9	61.4
Age 50-59	66.9	66.4
Age 60-69	70.3	68.4
Number of children	June 2022	May 2022
No children in household	65.3	63.5
1 child	63.2	61.5
2 children	61.4	61.9
3 children or more	62.0	61.5

Region	June 2022	May 2022
New South Wales	64.1	63.0
Victoria	64.2	62.3
Queensland	65.9	63.8
South Australia	61.4	61.1
Western Australia	64.9	65.4
Gender	June 2022	May 2022
Men	66.6	64.2
Women	62.3	61.7
Household income	June 2022	May 2022
<\$30K/annum	56.7	49.9
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	59.4	58.8
\$60K to <\$100K	63.6	61.2
\$100K to <\$150K	64.6	63.6
\$150K or more	71.1	69.5

Employer size	June 2022	May 2022
Self-employed/sole proprietor	59.1	59.7
2-50 employees	66.1	65.5
51-100 employees	61.5	58.5
101-500 employees	63.8	62.3
501-1,000 employees	65.9	63.9
1,001-5,000 employees	65.2	63.3
5,001-10,000 employees	67.0	65.8
More than 10,000 employees	65.8	65.1
Manager	June 2022	May 2022
Manager	64.4	63.3
Non-manager	64.7	63.2

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

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

# Mental Health Index™ (industry)

The lowest mental health score in June 2022 is among individuals employed in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (56.5), followed by those working in Administrative and Support services (60.2), and Retail Trade (61.3).

Those employed in Manufacturing (69.9), Public Administration (69.6), and Finance and Insurance (69.3) have the highest mental health scores this month.

Changes from the prior month are shown in the table.

Industry	June 2022	May 2022	Change
Finance and Insurance	69.3	63.1	6.2
Educational Services	65.5	61.6	3.9
Other	64.3	61.6	2.7
Health Care and Social Assistance	62.5	60.7	1.8
Wholesale Trade	67.6	66.0	1.6
Public Administration	69.6	68.3	1.3
Transportation and Warehousing	66.6	65.2	1.4
Manufacturing	69.9	68.7	1.2
Other services (except Public Administration)	61.5	60.5	1.0
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	64.5	63.8	0.7
Retail Trade	61.3	61.5	-0.2
Administrative and Support services	60.2	60.5	-0.3
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	56.5	58.4	-1.9
Construction	62.9	65.9	-3.0

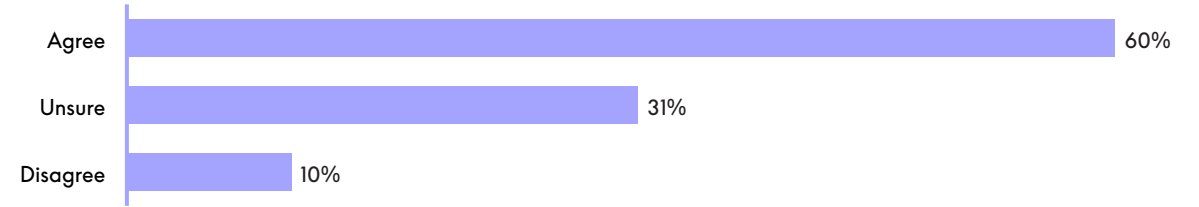
# Spotlight

## Perception of mental health

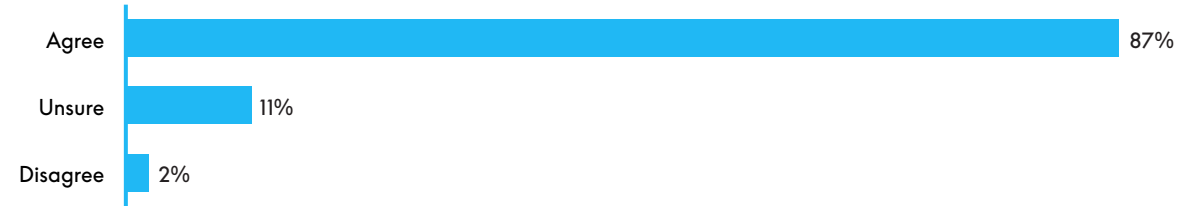
Three in five (60 per cent) Australians believe that people with mental health conditions are treated differently.

Nearly nine in ten Australians (87 per cent) believe that mental health conditions can be treated.

### People with mental health conditions are generally treated differently



### Mental health conditions can be treated



## Discussing mental health

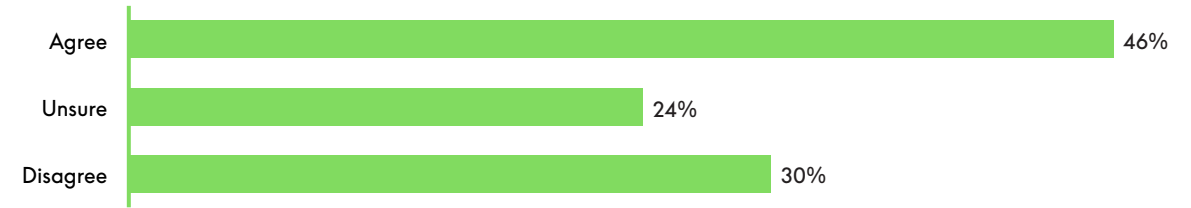
Australians were asked whether they feel comfortable talking openly about mental health with their manager.

- Nearly half (46 per cent) feel comfortable talking about mental health with their manager and this group has the most favourable mental health score (70.8).
- Nearly one-third (30 per cent) do not feel comfortable talking about mental health with their manager and this group has the lowest mental health score (55.7).

Australians were asked whether they feel comfortable talking openly about mental health with their colleagues.

- Nearly half (46 per cent) feel comfortable talking about mental health with their colleagues and this group has the most favourable mental health score (70.1).
- Nearly one-third (29 per cent) do not feel comfortable talking about mental health with their colleagues and this group has the lowest mental health score (55.0).

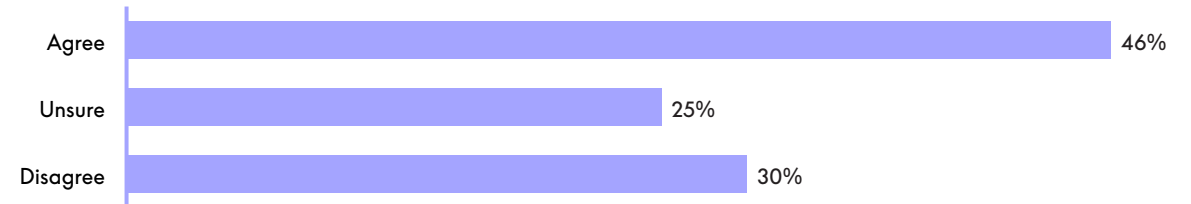
### I feel comfortable talking openly about mental health with my manager



### MHI score by I feel comfortable talking openly about mental health with my manager



### I feel comfortable talking openly about mental health with colleagues



### MHI score by I feel comfortable talking openly about mental health with colleagues

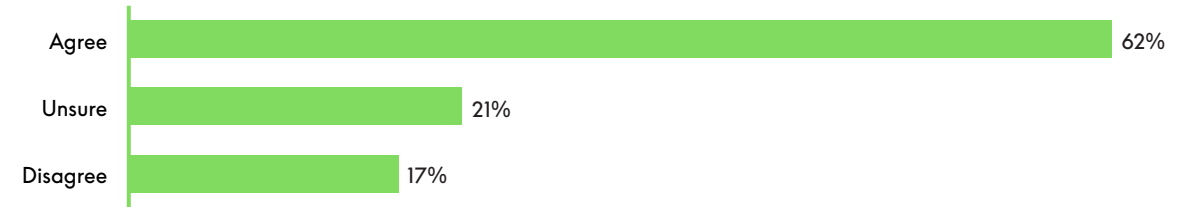




Australians were asked whether they feel comfortable talking openly about mental health with their friends and family.

- More than three in five (62 per cent) feel comfortable talking about mental health with their friends and family and this group has the most favourable mental health score (69.6).
- Nearly one in five (17 per cent) do not feel comfortable talking about mental health with their friends and family and this group has the lowest mental health score (48.5), nearly 16 points below the national average (64.3).

### I feel comfortable talking openly about mental health with friends and family



### MHI score by I feel comfortable talking openly about mental health with friends and family

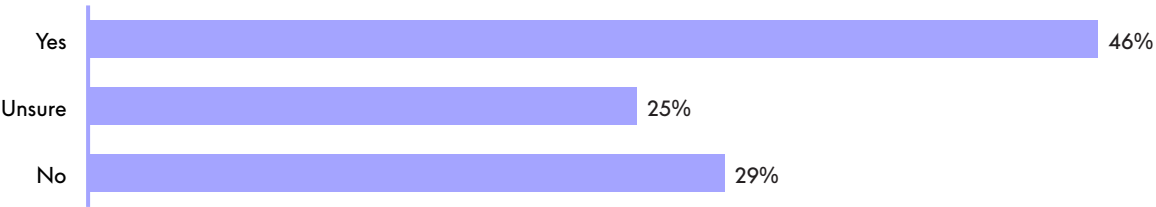


## Mental health support

Australians were asked whether they feel that their mental wellbeing was supported by their employer during the pandemic.

- Nearly half (46 per cent) feel that their mental wellbeing was supported by their employer during the pandemic and this group has the most favourable mental health score (72.0), nearly eight points higher than the national average (64.3).
- More than one-quarter (29 per cent) do not feel that their mental wellbeing was supported by their employer during the pandemic and this group has the lowest mental health score (55.1), more than nine points below the national average (64.3).

### My mental wellbeing was supported by my employer during the pandemic



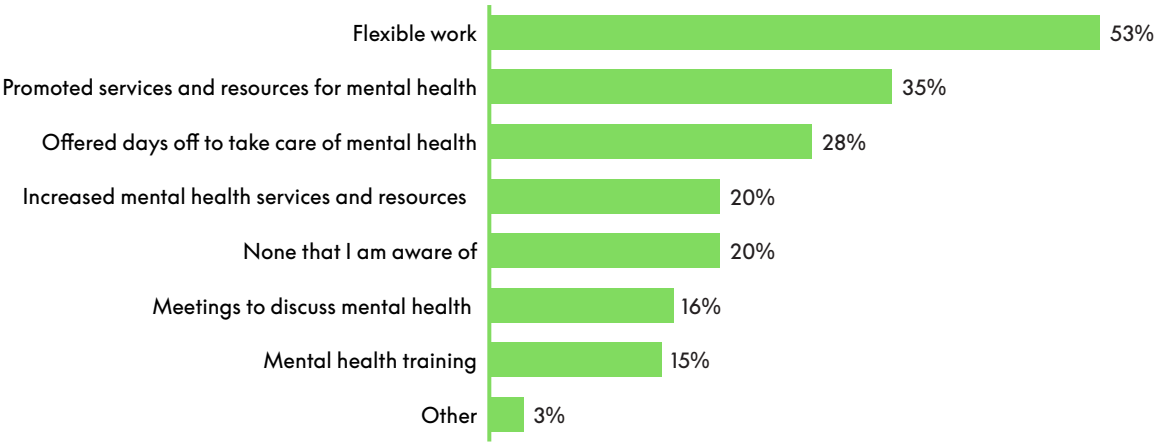
### MHI score by My mental wellbeing was supported by my employer during the pandemic



Australians reporting that their mental wellbeing was supported during the pandemic were asked about the actions taken by their employer.

- More than half (53 per cent) indicate that work flexibility has been offered by their employer, followed by 35 per cent promoting services and resources for mental health.
- Managers are 70 per cent more likely than non-managers to report that work flexibility has been offered by their employer.

Actions taken by my employer to support mental health



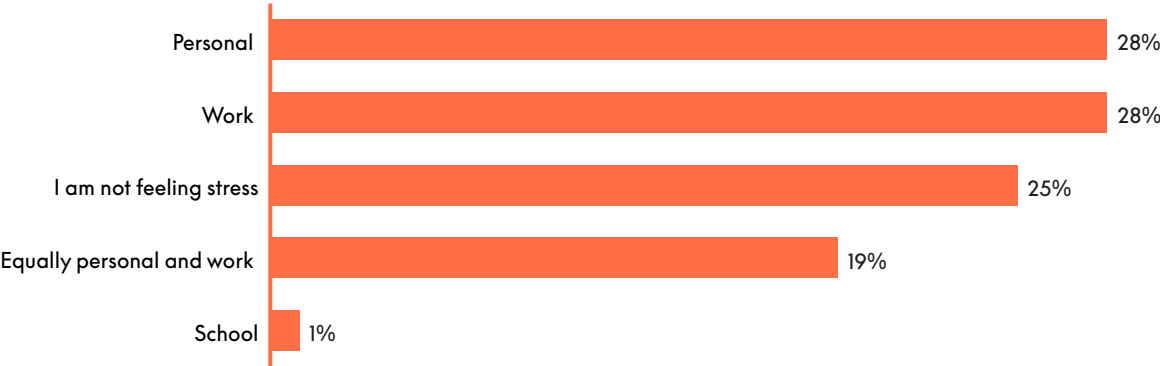
# Stress

## Primary source of stress

Australians were asked about their primary source of stress.

- Three-quarters (75 per cent) indicate that personal and/or work stressors are their primary source of stress.
- Respondents under the age of 40 are 55 per cent more likely than those older than 50 to indicate that work is their primary source of stress.
- Managers are 60 per cent more likely than non-managers to indicate that work is their primary source of stress.

Primary source of stress



MHI score by Primary source of stress

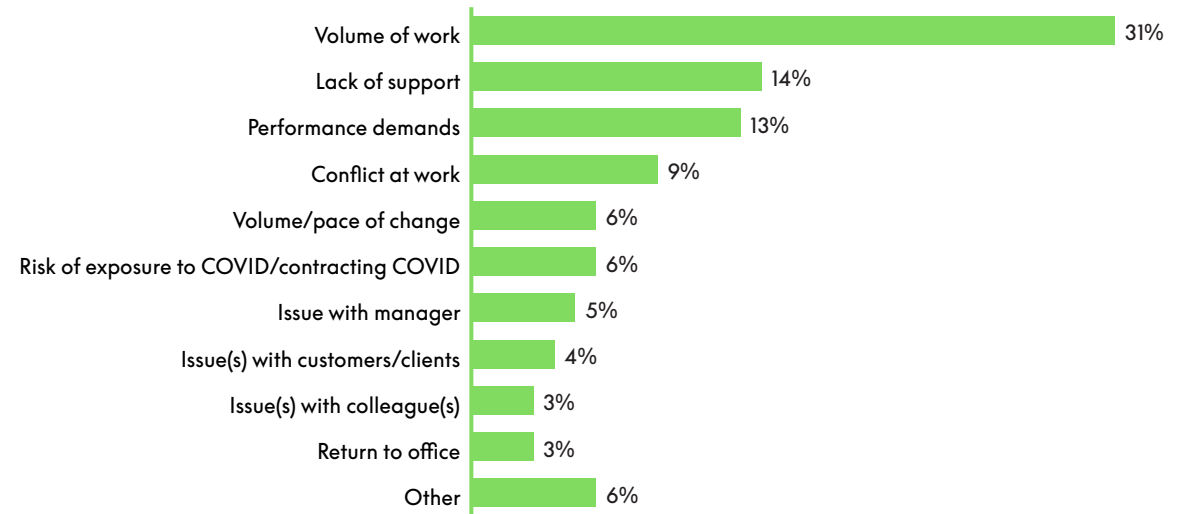


## Work-related stress

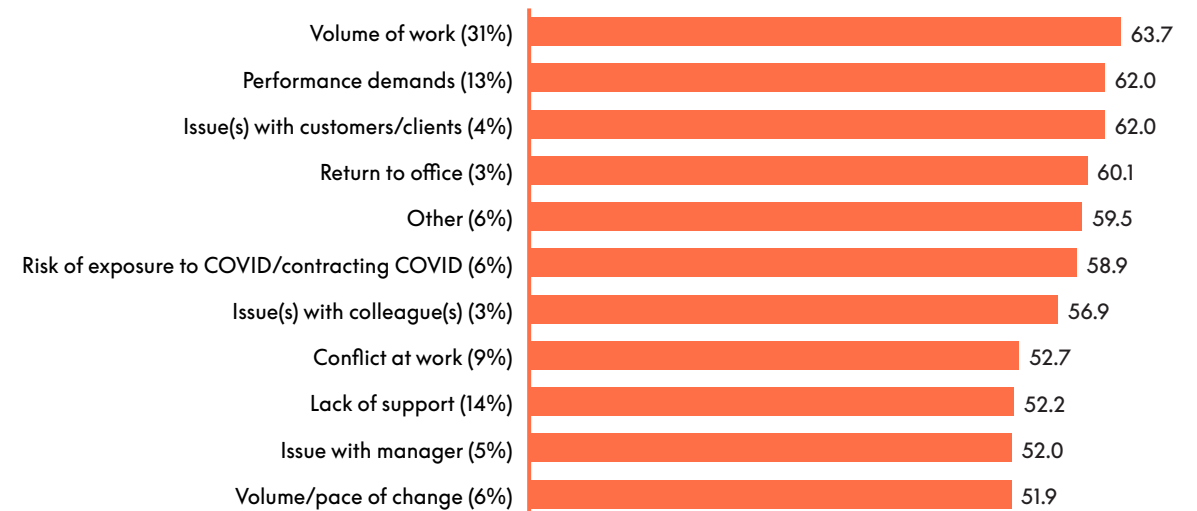
Australians reporting that work is a primary source of stress were asked about the specific type of work stress.

- Nearly one-third (31 per cent) indicate that volume of work is the primary source of work stress, 14 per cent report lack of support, and 13 per cent report performance demands as the primary source of work stress.
- Managers are 70 per cent more likely than non-managers to indicate that volume of work is their primary source of work stress.
- Employees under the age of 40 are twice as likely as those older than 50 to report lack of support as their primary source of work stress.

## Primary source of work stress



## MHI score by Primary source of work stress

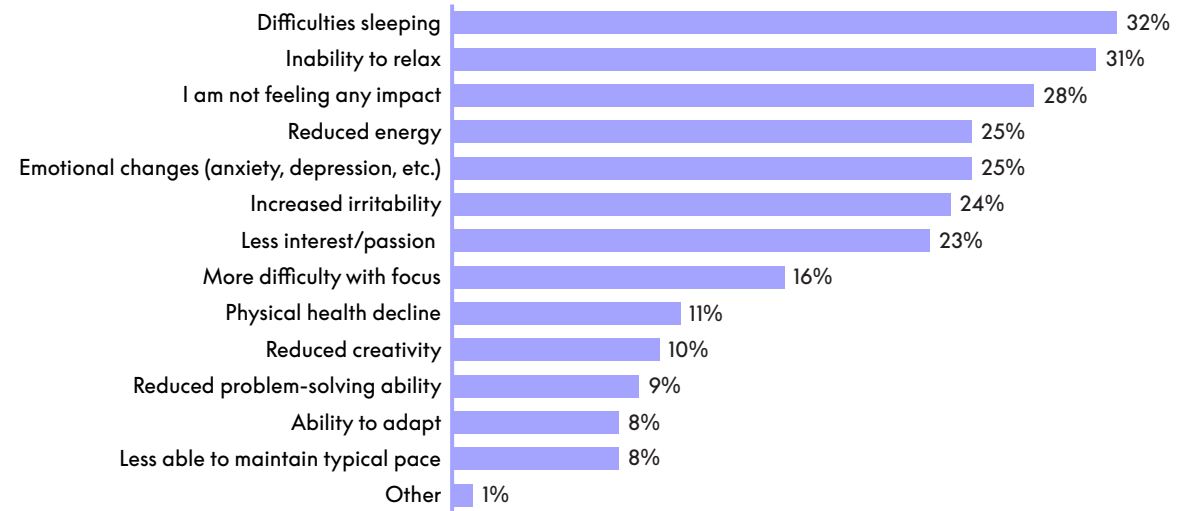


## Impact of stress

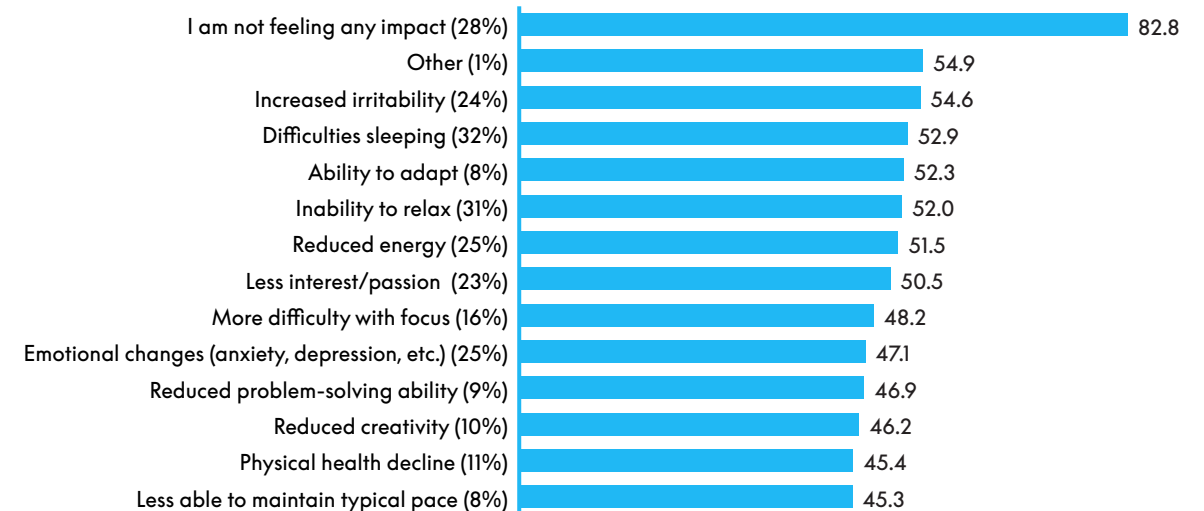
Australians were asked to what extent personal and/or work-related stressors have impacted them.

- Nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) are feeling some impact of personal and/or work stress.
- Nearly one-third (32 per cent) have difficulties sleeping, 31 per cent are unable to relax, and 25 per cent have experienced reduced energy.
- Individuals without emergency savings are 50 per cent more likely than those with emergency savings to be unable to relax.
- Respondents under the age of 40 are more than twice as likely as those older than 50 to have difficulty adapting.
- Respondents under the age of 40 are 40 per cent more likely than those older than 50 to be unable to relax.

## Impact of personal and/or work related stress



## MHI score by Impact of personal and/or work related stress

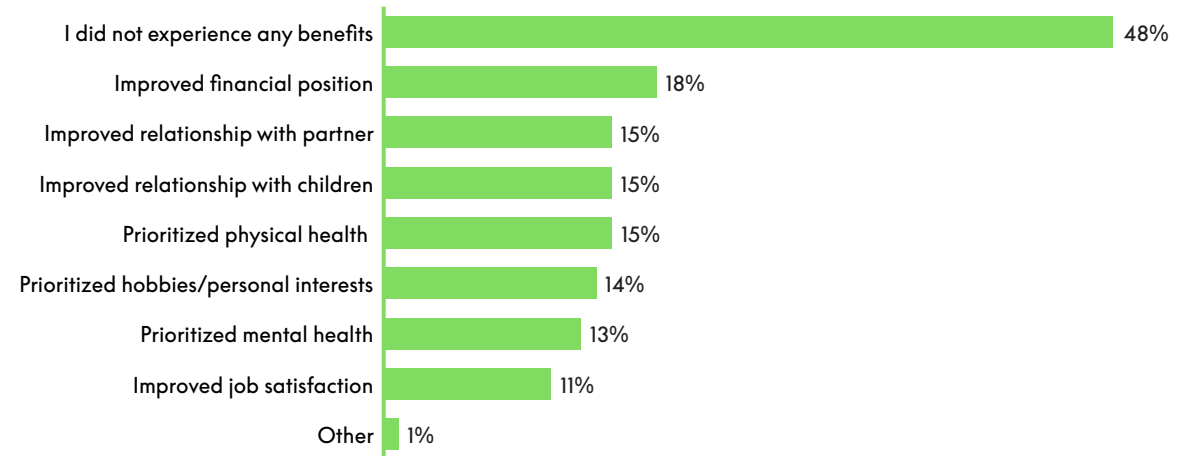


## Pandemic silver linings

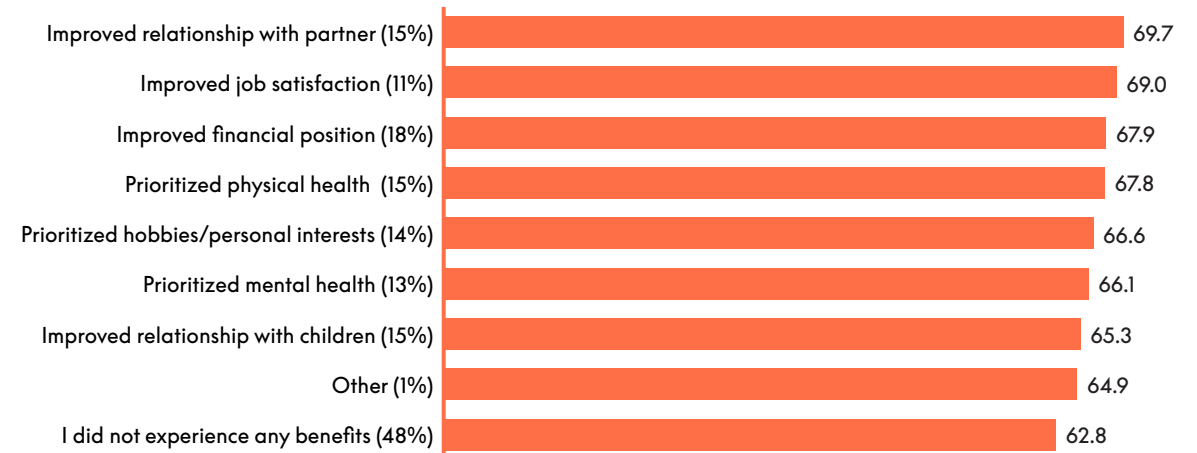
Australians were asked whether they have experienced any benefits because of the pandemic.

- More than half (52 per cent) have experienced some benefits because of the pandemic.
- Nearly one in five (18 per cent) have an improved financial position, 15 per cent have experienced an improvement in their relationship with a partner and an equal number have experienced an improvement in their relationship with their children.
- Respondents under the age of 40 are nearly twice as likely as those 50 and older to report improved job satisfaction.
- Parents are more than twice as likely as non-parents to indicate that their relationship with a partner has improved because of the pandemic.
- Parents are 80 per cent more likely than non-parents to report improved job satisfaction.
- Managers are 70 per cent more likely than non-managers to report that their financial position has improved because of the pandemic.

## Benefits experienced because of the pandemic



## MHI score by Benefits experienced because of the pandemic



# 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. 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).
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. Respondents are asked to consider the prior two weeks when answering each question. Data for the current report was collected between June 3 to June 10, 2022.

## Calculations

Beginning in May 2022, corresponding to year 3 of the Mental Health Index by LifeWorks™, scores are represented as absolute. The move to absolute scores has been taken given the degree of change that has occurred over the last two years. It is unlikely that a return to pre-pandemic levels will be realized hence, the reference relative to that benchmark is no longer relevant.

To create the Mental Health Index, a response scoring system is applied to turn individual responses into point values. Higher point values are associated with better mental health and less mental health risk. The sum of scores is divided by the total number of possible points to generate a score out of 100. The raw score is the mathematical mean of the individual scores. Distribution of scores is defined according to the following scale:

**Distressed** 0 - 49      **Strained** 50-79      **Optimal** 80 - 100

## Additional data and analyses

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





## About LifeWorks

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

For more information, visit:

 [LifeWorks.com](https://www.lifeworks.com)

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