



The Mental Health Index by TELUS Health.

Special report on physical health and wellbeing

Australia | April 2023

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What you need to know for April 2023.

1. More than one-third of workers in Australia have a high mental health risk.

- At 62.8, the mental health of workers in Australia improved modestly from the prior month
- Anxiety, isolation, and work productivity have been the lowest mental health sub-scores for five consecutive periods
- 35% have a high mental health risk, 42% have a moderate mental health risk, and 23% have a low mental health risk
- Mental health scores declined in New South Wales and South Australia while scores improved Queensland, Victoria, and South Australia
- Labourers have a lower mental health score than service industry and office workers
- Managers have a lower mental health score than non-managers

2. More than one in ten workers report mental health decline or significant mental health challenges.

- The mental health scores of workers reporting a decline in their mental health or significant mental health challenges are 43 or more points lower than workers reporting good mental health and 27 or more points lower than the national average
- Labourers are more likely to report their mental health is in decline than office and service workers
- Workers older than 50 are more likely than workers under 40 to self-report good mental health



do not exercise
this group's mental health scores are much lower than those who exercise most days



say their **physical health is in decline** or have significant health challenges



say their **mental health is in decline** or have significant health challenges



are dissatisfied with the level of available healthcare

3. Nearly one in seven workers report a decline in their physical health or significant physical health challenges.

- The mental health scores of workers reporting a decline in their physical health or significant physical health challenges are 27 or more points below workers reporting good physical health and 15 or more points below the national average
- 27 per cent of workers cite motivation and/or no energy as the barrier to exercising regularly
- 10 per cent of workers say cost is the biggest barrier to exercising regularly
- 16 per cent do not exercise and the mental health score of this group is 11 points lower than workers who exercise four or more times per week
- 17 per cent exercise to improve or maintain their mental health
- Workers over 50 are more likely to exercise to maintain their health whereas workers under 40 are more likely to exercise to improve or maintain their appearance

4. Nearly two in five report better sleep would be most helpful in managing their physical health, followed by affordable nutritious foods.

- 82 per cent believe physical activity has a positive effect on their mental health
- Most workers indicate that they exercise vigorously less than 1.5 hours a week
- Nine per cent say managing their physical health starts with their mental health; this group has a mental health score 13 points lower than the national average
- 13 per cent of workers have a physical health issue that interferes with work
- Among workers with a physical health issue that interferes with work, 33 per cent say their employer is unaware, or are unsure whether their employer is aware, of their physical health issue

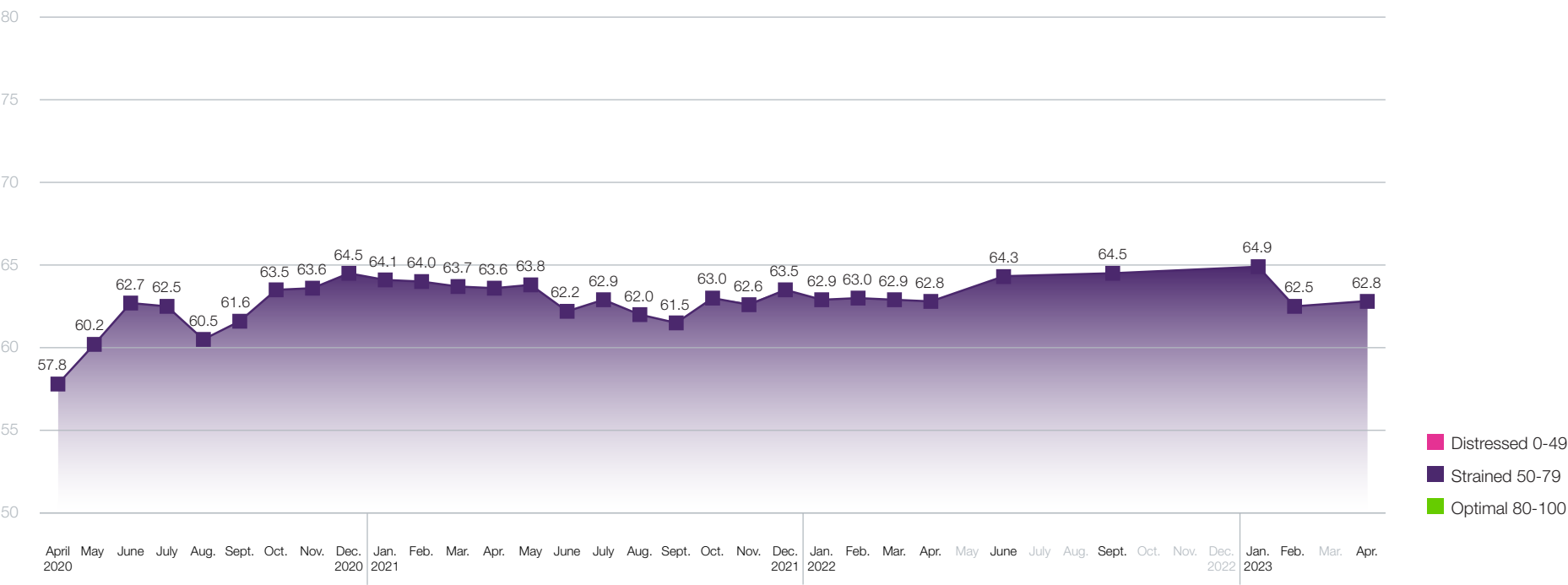
5. More than one in ten workers are dissatisfied with the level of available healthcare.

- The mental health score of workers dissatisfied with available healthcare is 18 points lower than satisfied workers and 14 points lower than the national average
- Women are two and half times more likely than men to be dissatisfied with the level of available healthcare
- 18 per cent of those dissatisfied cite long wait times for treatment
- 18 per cent cite long wait times for treatment
- 14 per cent cite little or no access to a family doctor
- 10 per cent say access to a family doctor would be most helpful in managing their physical health

The Mental Health Index.

The overall Mental Health Index (MHI) for April 2023 is 62.8. The mental health of workers in Australia improved modestly from the prior period.

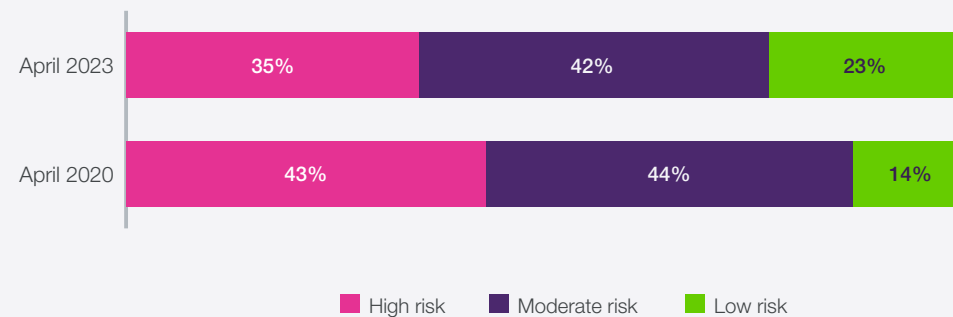
MHI Current Month April 2023	March 2023
62.8	62.5





Mental health risk.

In April 2023, 35 per cent of Australians have a high mental health risk, 42 per cent have a moderate mental health risk, and 23 per cent have a low mental health risk. In contrast, three years after the launch of the Index in April 2020, near the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an eight per cent decrease in high-risk workers and nine per cent increase in low-risk workers.



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.

Mental Health Index sub-scores.

For nearly one year, the lowest Mental Health Index sub-score is for the risk measure of anxiety (55.6). Isolation (59.8), work productivity (60.8), depression (61.2), optimism (64.7), and financial risk (66.1) follow. General psychological health (70.1) continues to be the most favourable mental health measure in April 2023.

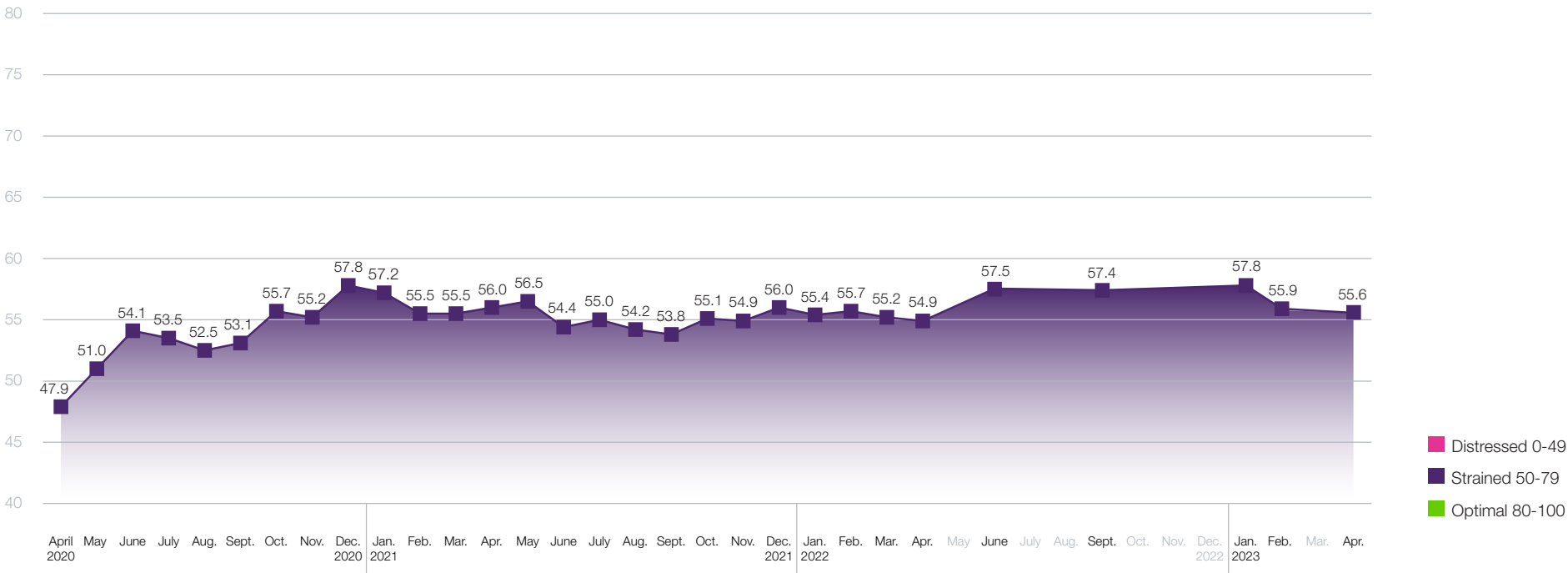
- Anxiety, isolation, and work productivity have been the lowest mental health sub-scores for five consecutive periods
- Anxiety, depression, and optimism sub-scores have declined from the prior period
- The financial risk sub-score increased 2.7 points from February 2023

Mental Health Index Sub-scores	April 2023	March 2023
Anxiety	55.6	55.9
Isolation	59.8	58.8
Work productivity	60.8	59.8
Depression	61.2	61.4
Optimism	64.7	65.9
Financial risk	66.1	63.4
Psychological health	70.1	69.5



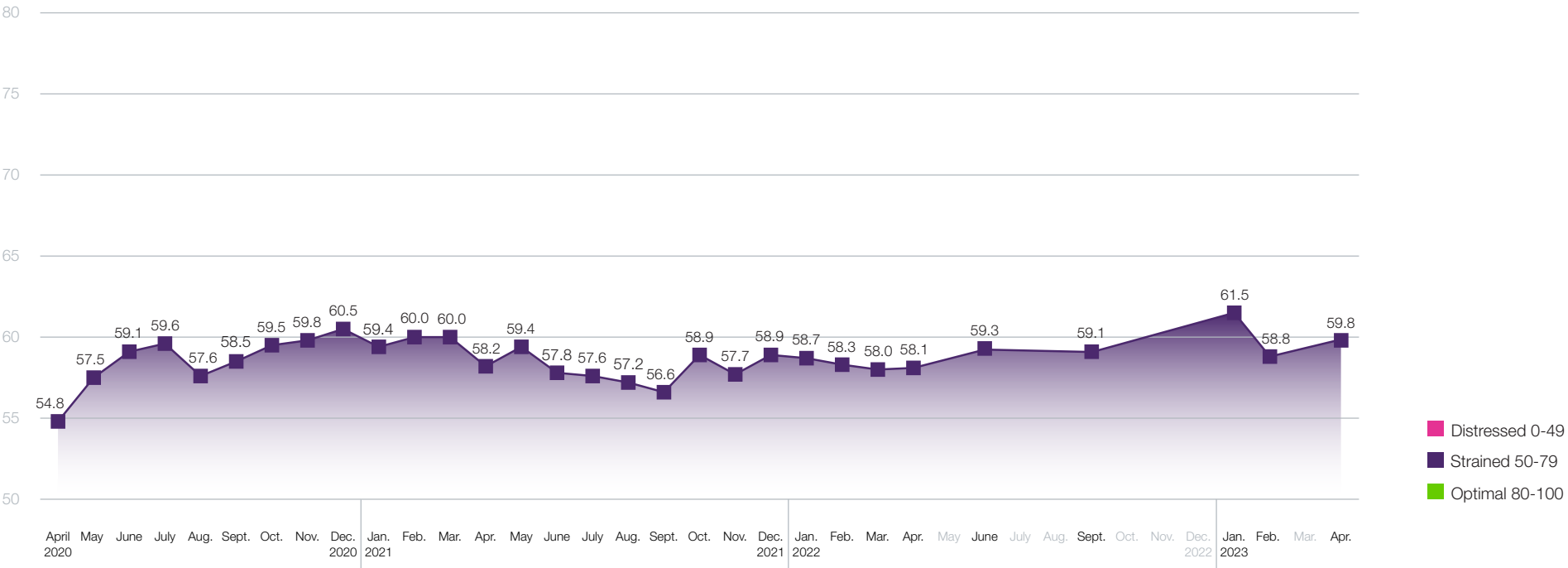
Anxiety

The anxiety sub-score showed improvement from the launch of the Index in April 2020 through December 2020. A declining trend was observed through September 2021 followed by variability through April 2022. A sharp improvement occurred from April to June 2022 and remained nearly unchanged in September 2022. Following three months of relative stability, the anxiety score fell sharply in February 2023 and continues to decline in April 2023.



Isolation

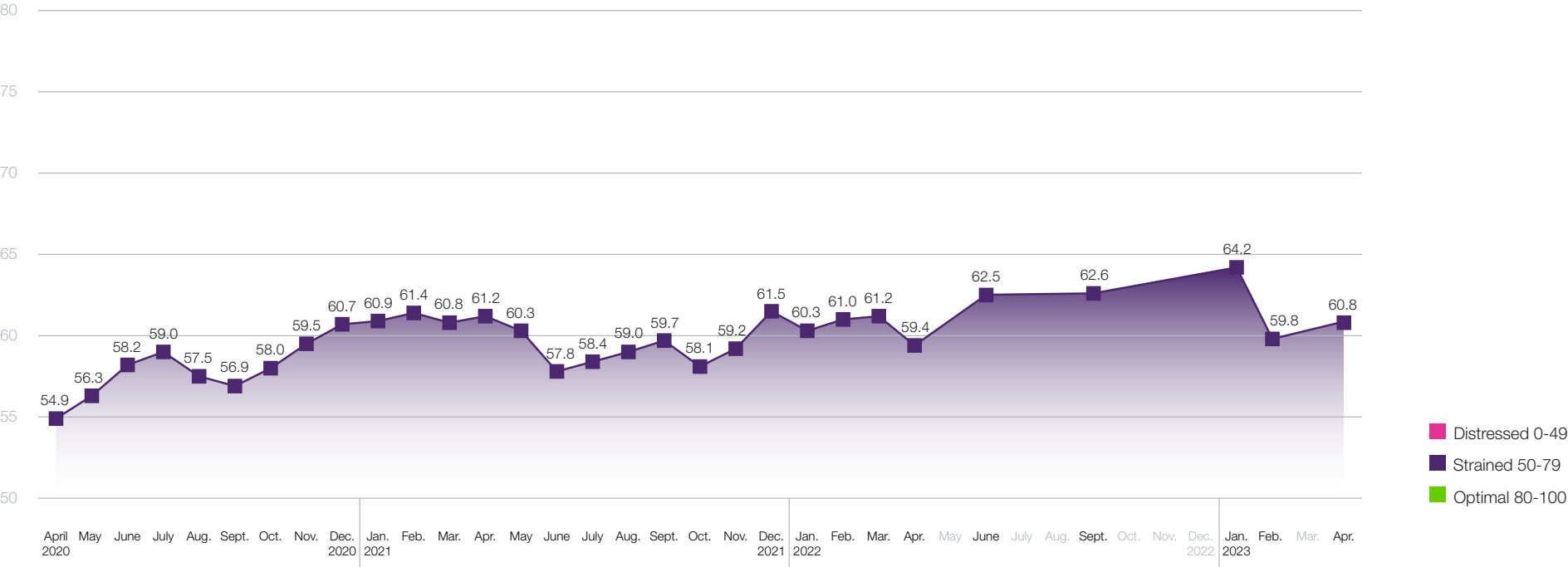
The isolation sub-score increased dramatically from April to July 2020 and, following a one-month decline, improved through December 2020. A period of decline followed through September 2021. After some inconsistency through the remainder of 2021, scores fell through March 2022 but improved in June 2022. A significant increase occurred from September 2022 to January 2023, reaching the highest point since the launch of the Index. In February 2023, the isolation score fell a sharp 2.7 points but recovered 1.0 point in April 2023.



Work productivity

The work productivity sub-score measures the impact of mental health on work productivity and goals.

The work productivity sub-score has made incremental improvements from April 2020 through January 2023. After reaching the highest score since the launch of the Index in January 2023, the work productivity sub-score declined 4.4 points in February. A modest 1.0-point increase is observed in the work productivity score of Australians in April 2023.



Mental health by gender and age.

- Since the launch of the MHI, women have a significantly lower mental health score than men. In April 2023, the mental health score of women is 59.8 compared to 66.4 for men
- Since April 2020, mental health scores have improved with age
- Differences in mental health scores between individuals with and without children have been reported since the launch of the Index in April 2020. Three years later, this pattern continues with a lower score for individuals with at least one child (60.6) than individuals without children (64.1)

Mental health by employment status.

- Overall, five per cent of respondents are unemployed¹ and 11 per cent report reduced hours or reduced salary
- Individuals reporting reduced salary compared to the prior month have the lowest mental health score (44.3), followed by individuals working fewer hours (51.3), individuals not currently employed (58.5), and individuals with no change to salary or hours (64.7)
- Managers have a lower mental health score (62.4) than non-managers (63.1)
- Labourers have a lower mental health score (61.2) than service (63.2) and office workers (63.1)
- Respondents working for companies with 5,001-10,000 employees have the highest mental health score (64.9)
- Respondents working for companies with 501-1,000 employees have the lowest mental health score (60.1)

Emergency savings

- Workers without emergency savings continue to experience a lower score in mental health (41.4) than the overall group (62.8). Workers with emergency savings have a mental health score of 72.9

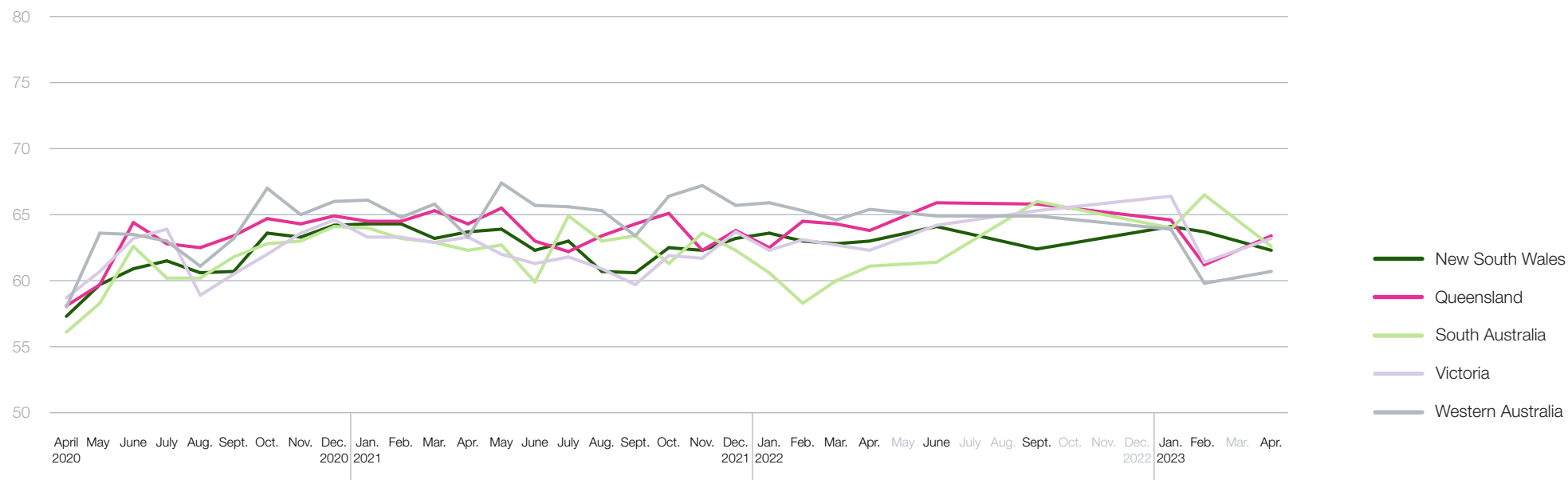


¹ MHI respondents who have been employed in the past six months are included in the poll.

The Mental Health Index by region.

Regional mental health scores since October 2020 have remained inconsistent. In April 2023, mental health scores declined in South Australia and New South Wales while scores improved in all other states.

- Despite a 0.9-point increase from February 2023, Western Australia (60.7) has the lowest mental health score
- The most significant decline is in South Australia with a 3.9-point decrease from the prior period
- The mental health score in Queensland improved 2.2 points from February and is the highest mental health score (63.4) in the country



Employment status	Apr. 2023	March 2023
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	64.7	64.1
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	51.3	50.9
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	44.3	49.0
Not currently employed	58.5	58.5

Age group	Apr. 2023	March 2023
Age 20-29	52.4	53.4
Age 30-39	57.3	57.9
Age 40-49	61.1	61.6
Age 50-59	65.9	64.8
Age 60-69	69.2	70.2

Number of children	Apr. 2023	March 2023
No children in household	64.1	64.6
1 child	63.0	60.6
2 children	58.4	57.7
3 children or more	59.5	56.2

Region	Apr. 2023	March 2023
New South Wales	62.3	63.7
Victoria	63.2	61.4
Queensland	63.4	61.2
South Australia	62.6	66.5
Western Australia	60.7	59.8

Gender	Apr. 2023	March 2023
Men	66.4	66.6
Women	59.8	59.7

Household income	Apr. 2023	March 2023
<\$30K/annum	52.8	51.4
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	56.6	59.3
\$60K to <\$100K	61.5	61.8
\$100K to <\$150K	65.9	61.9
\$150K or more	67.7	69.8

Employer size	Apr. 2023	March 2023
Self-employed/sole proprietor	63.1	59.8
2-50 employees	64.5	65.3
51-100 employees	61.6	56.6
101-500 employees	61.7	61.0
501-1,000 employees	60.1	66.6
1,001-5,000 employees	62.8	61.8
5,001-10,000 employees	64.9	61.5
More than 10,000 employees	64.0	64.2

Manager	Apr. 2023	March 2023
Manager	62.4	61.8
Non-manager	63.1	63.0

Work environment	Apr. 2023	March 2023
Labour	61.2	-
Office/desk	63.1	-
Service	63.2	-

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

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

The Mental Health Index by industry.

Full-time post-secondary students have the lowest mental health score (53.2) in April 2023, followed by individuals working in Food Services (57.1).

Respondents employed in Transportation and Warehousing (69.7) and Wholesale Trade (69.4) have the highest mental health scores this month.

Changes from the prior month are shown in the table.



Industry	April 2023	March 2023	Change
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	67.4	55.4	12.0
Full-time post-secondary student	53.2	44.4	8.8
Other services (except Public Administration)	71.5	63.7	7.8
Transportation and Warehousing	69.7	65.3	4.4
Food Services	57.1	53.6	3.5
Manufacturing	66.2	64.1	2.1
Finance and Insurance	60.4	58.3	2.1
Wholesale Trade	69.4	68.1	1.3
Administrative and Support services	61.1	60.1	1.0
Health Care and Social Assistance	62.4	61.6	0.8
Educational Services	65.2	64.8	0.4
Public Administration	68.0	68.9	-0.9
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	63.0	64.6	-1.6
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	59.0	60.7	-1.7
Other	59.9	62.2	-2.3
Retail Trade	59.0	61.7	-2.8
Construction	64.7	67.5	-2.8
Technology	64.0	72.7	-8.7

Spotlight

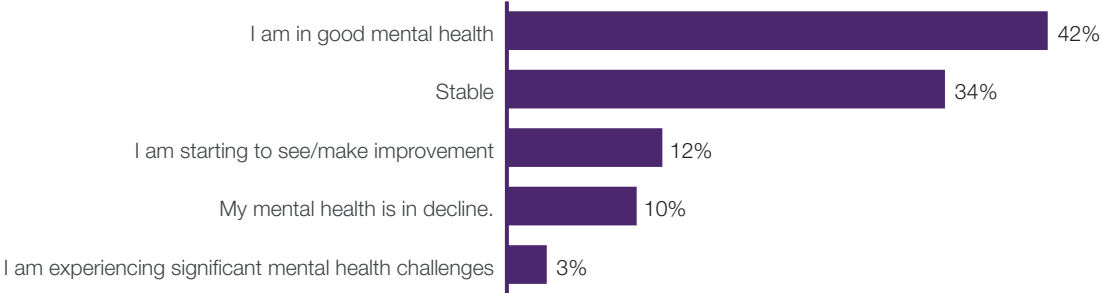
Self-reported mental health.

Workers in Australia were asked to describe their current mental health.

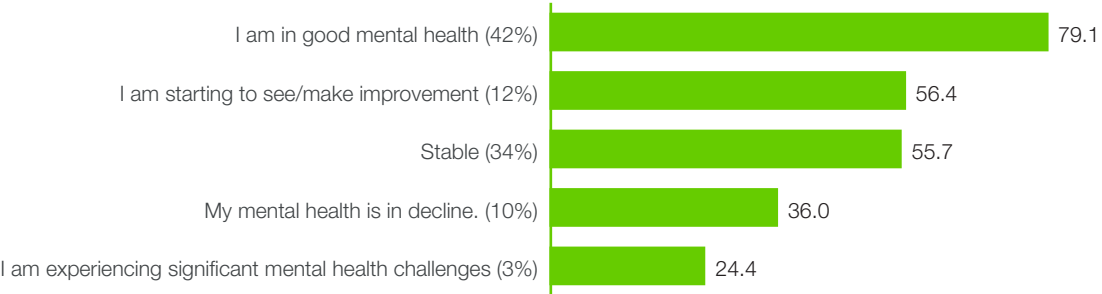
- More than one in ten (13 per cent) say their mental health is in decline or they are experiencing significant mental health challenges; workers in these categories have mental health scores 43 or more points lower than workers reporting good mental health and 27 or more points lower than the national average (62.8)
- Individuals working as labourers are 50 per cent more likely than office workers and 60 per cent more likely than service workers to report their mental health is in decline
- Workers under 40 are four times more likely than workers over 50 to report they are starting to see/make improvement in their mental health
- More than two in five (42 per cent) self-report good mental health; this group has the highest mental health score (79.1), 16 points higher than the national average (62.8)
- Workers older than 50 are twice as likely as workers under 40 to report being in good mental health



Current mental health



MHI score by “Current mental health”



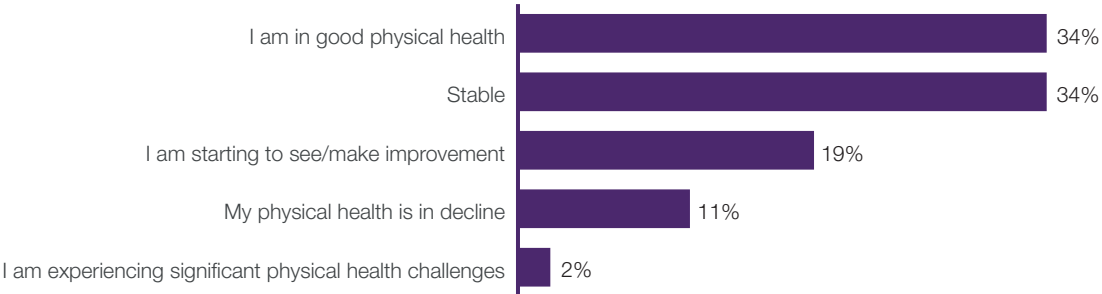
Self-reported physical health.

Workers in Australia were asked to describe their current physical health.

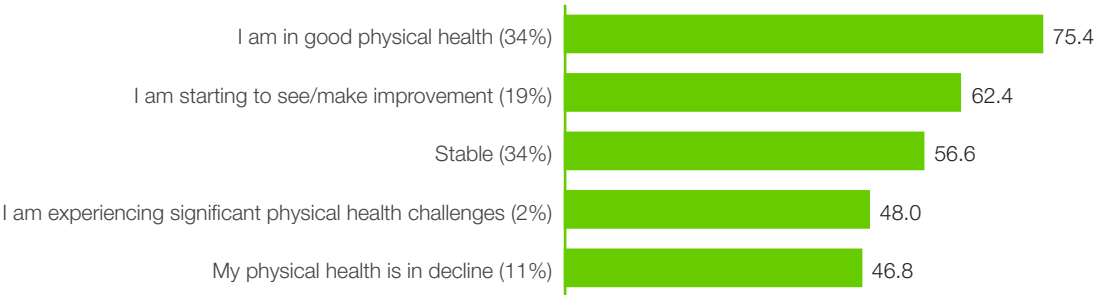
- More than one in ten (13 per cent) say their physical health is in decline or they are experiencing significant physical health challenges; workers in these categories have mental health scores 27 or more points lower than workers reporting good physical health and 15 or more points lower than the national average (62.8)
- Workers under 40 are 70 per cent more likely than workers over 50 to report they are starting to see/make improvement in their physical health
- More than one-third (34 per cent) self-report good physical health; this group has the highest mental health score (75.4), nearly 13 points higher than the national average (62.8)



Current physical health



MHI score by “Current physical health”



Physical health effect on mental health.

Workers in Australia were asked whether physical activity has a positive effect on their mental health.

More than four in five (82 per cent) believe that physical activity has a positive effect on their mental health; this group has the highest mental health score (64.2), nine points higher than workers who disagree (55.6) and slightly higher than the national average (62.8)

Physical activity has a positive effect on my mental health



MHI score by “Physical activity has a positive effect on my mental health”



Workers in Australia were asked whether physical activity and good mental health are linked.

Nearly nine in ten (86 per cent) believe that physical activity and good mental health are linked; this group has a mental health score (63.4) modestly above the national average (62.8)

I believe that physical activity and (good) mental health are linked



MHI score by “I believe that physical activity and (good) mental health are linked”

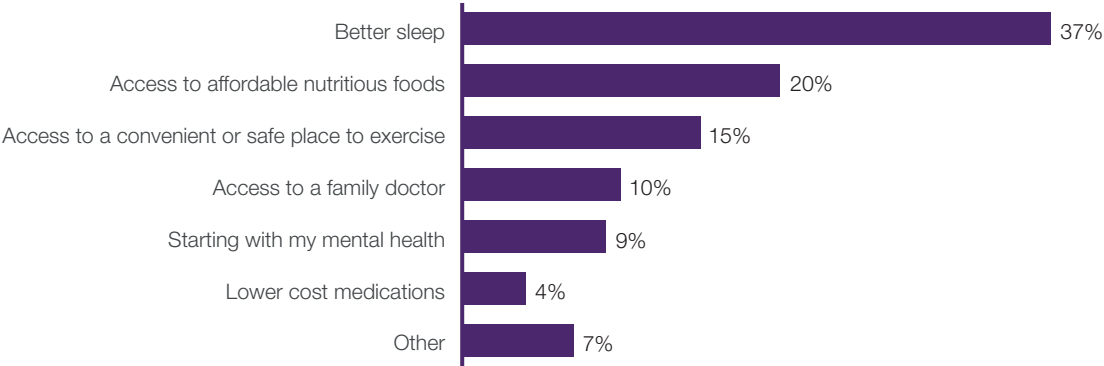


Workers in Australia were asked what would be most helpful in managing their physical health.

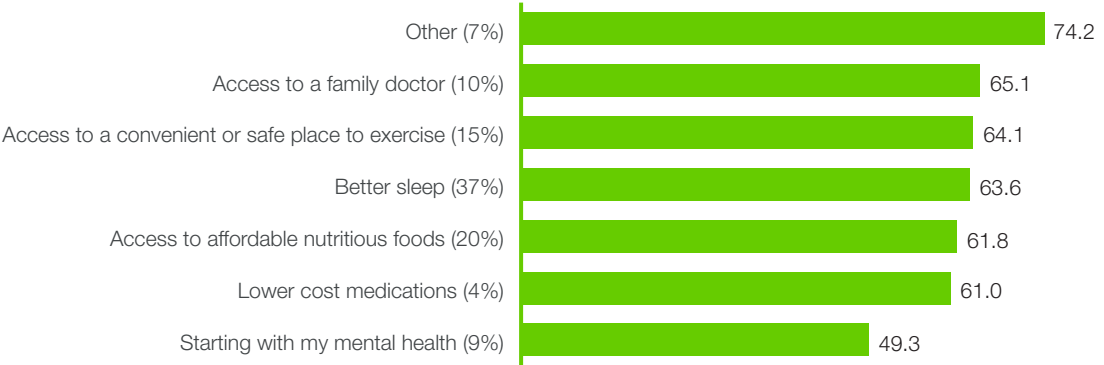
- More than one-third (37 per cent) report better sleep would be most helpful in managing their physical health, 20 per cent report access to affordable nutritious foods, 15 per cent report access to a convenient or safe place to exercise, and 10 per cent report access to a family doctor as most helpful in managing their physical health
- Nine per cent said that starting with their mental health would be most helpful in managing their physical health; the mental health score of this group (49.3) is 13 points lower than the national average (62.8)
- Workers under 40 are 80 per cent more likely than workers over 50 to say that access to affordable nutritious foods would be most helpful in managing their physical health



Most helpful in managing physical health



MHI score by “Most helpful in managing physical health”



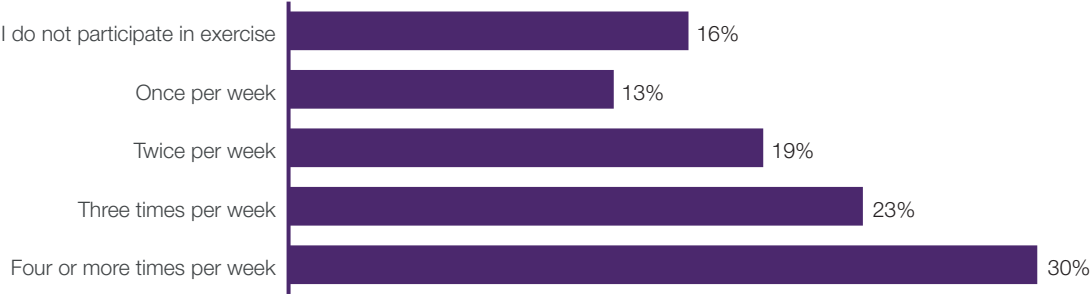
Exercise

Workers in Australia were asked how frequently they exercise.

- Nearly one in five (16 per cent) do not exercise. The mental health score of this group (58.3) is 11 points lower than workers who exercise four or more times per week (69.6) and more than four points lower than the national average (62.8)
- Workers over 50 years are 60 per cent more likely than workers under 40 to report not exercising
- Nearly one-third (30 per cent) exercise four or more times per week; this group has the highest mental health score (69.6), nearly seven points higher than the national average (62.8)



How frequently do you exercise?



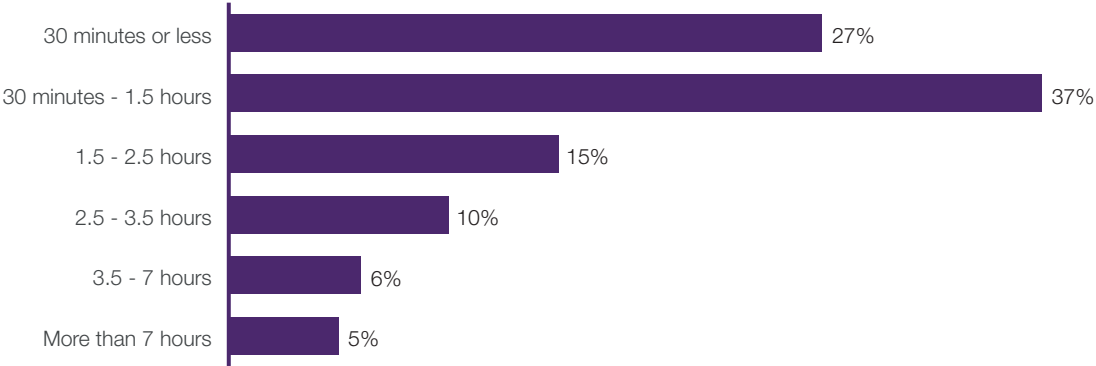
MHI score by “How frequently do you exercise?”



Workers in Australia who exercise were asked about their total duration of moderate to vigorous exercise in a typical week.

The highest mental health score (72.3) is among five per cent of workers reporting more than seven hours of moderate to vigorous exercise per week. The mental health score of this group is 13 points higher than workers who report 30 minutes or less of moderate to vigorous exercise (59.1) and more than nine points higher than the national average (62.8).

Total duration of moderate to vigorous exercise



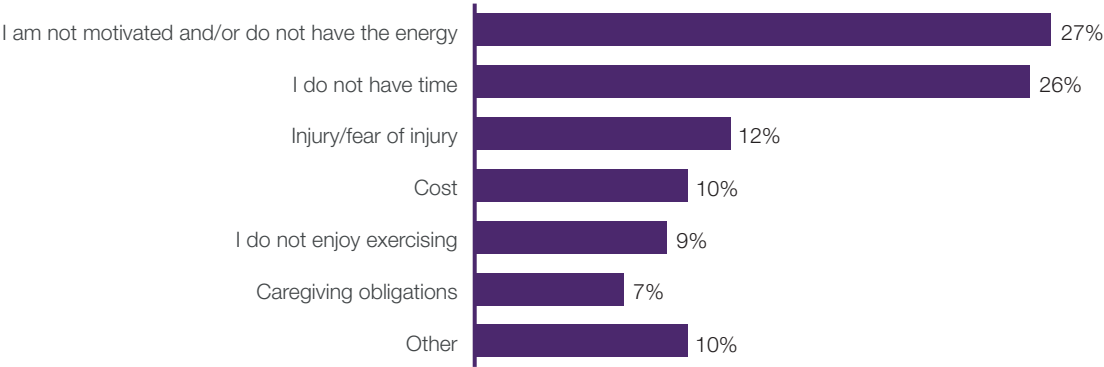
MHI score by “Total duration of moderate to vigorous exercise”



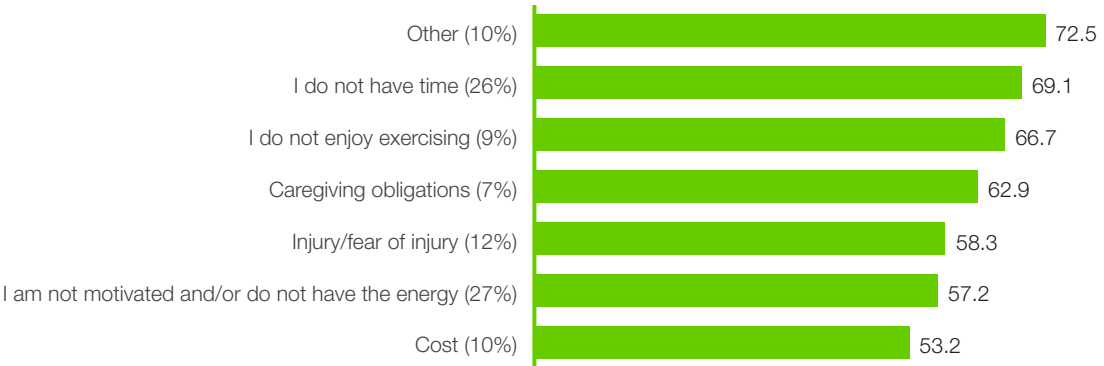
Workers in Australia were asked about the biggest barrier to exercising regularly.

- More than one-quarter (27 per cent) are not motivated and/or do not have the energy to exercise and 26 per cent say they do not have time to exercise regularly
- Nearly one in ten (9 per cent) say cost is the biggest barrier to exercising regularly; this group has the lowest mental health score (53.2), nearly 10 points lower than the national average (62.8)
- Parents are 80 per cent more likely than non-parents to say cost is the biggest barrier to exercising regularly
- Labourers are 50 per cent more likely than office workers and nearly twice as likely as service workers to report cost as the biggest barrier to exercising regularly
- Non-parents are two times more likely than parents to report not enjoying exercising

Biggest barrier to exercising regularly



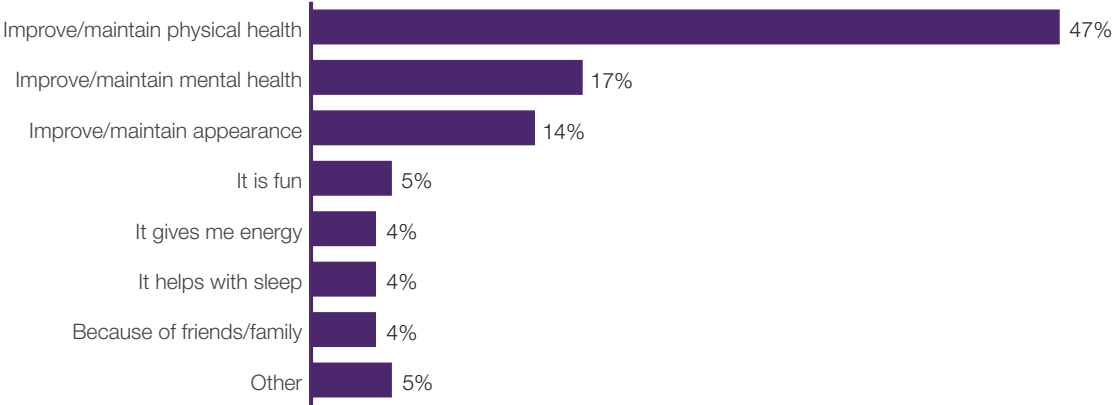
MHI score by “Biggest barrier to exercising regularly”



Workers in Australia were asked about the primary reason they exercise.

- Nearly half (47 per cent) exercise to improve/maintain physical health; this group has the highest mental health score (66.5), four points higher than the national average (62.8)
- Workers over 50 are 40 per cent more likely than workers under 40 to exercise to improve/maintain their physical health
- Nearly one in five (17 per cent) exercise to improve/maintain their mental health; this group has the lowest mental health score (56.1), nearly seven points lower than the national average (62.8)
- Parents are 50 per cent more likely than non-parents to exercise to improve/maintain their mental health
- Fourteen per cent exercise to improve/maintain their appearance; the mental health of this group (60.1) is three points lower than the national average (62.8)
- Workers under 40 are nearly two and half times more likely than workers over 50 to report exercising to improve/maintain their appearance

Primary reason for exercising



MHI score by “Primary reason for exercising”



Physical health issues that interfere with work.

Workers in Australia were asked whether they have a physical health issue that interferes with work.

- More than one in ten (13 per cent) have a physical health issue that interferes with work; this group has a mental health score (50.1) 15 points lower than workers not reporting a physical health issue that interferes with work (64.7) and nearly 13 points lower than the national average (62.8)
- Labourers are 60 per cent more likely than office workers to have a physical health issue that interferes with work



Do you have a physical health issue that interferes with work?



MHI score by “Do you have a physical health issue that interferes with work?”



Workers in Australia reporting a physical health issue that interferes with their work were asked whether their employer is aware of the issue.

- More than one in ten (12 per cent) report their employer is unaware of their physical health issue; the mental health score of this group (39.9) is 23 points lower than the national average (62.8) and 14 points lower than workers whose employers are aware of their physical health issue
- More than one in five (21 per cent) are unsure whether their employer is aware of their physical health issue that impacts work. The mental health score of this group (44.3) is more than 18 points lower than the national average (62.8)
- Two-thirds (67 per cent) report their employer is aware of their physical health issue; despite this the mental health score of this group (53.8) is nine points lower than the national average (62.8)

Is your employer aware that you have a physical health issue that interferes with work?



MHI score by “Is your employer aware that you have a physical health issue that interferes with work?”



Workers in Australia whose employers are aware of their physical health issue that interferes with work were asked whether their employer is helpful in managing work.

- One in ten (10 per cent) report their employer is not helpful in managing work given the challenges with their physical health issue; the mental health score of this group (40.1) is nearly 23 points below the national average (62.8) and 17 points lower than workers whose employers are always helpful
- Women are six times more likely than men to report their employer is not helpful in managing work given the challenges with their physical health issue
- Nearly nine in ten (89 per cent) report that their employer is always or sometimes helpful in managing work given the challenges with their physical health issue; despite this support, the mental health score of this group is five or more points lower than the national average (62.8)



Is your employer helpful managing work given the challenges you have with your physical health issue?



MHI score by “Is your employer helpful managing work given the challenges you have with your physical health issue?”



Satisfaction with healthcare.

Workers in Australia were asked whether they are satisfied with the level of healthcare available.

- More than one in ten (11 per cent) are dissatisfied with the level of healthcare available; the mental health of this group is lowest (48.9), 18 points lower than workers who are satisfied (66.9) and 14 points lower than the national average (62.8)
- Women are nearly two and half times more likely than men to report being dissatisfied with the level of healthcare available
- Seven in ten (70 per cent) are satisfied with the level of healthcare available; this group has the highest mental health score (66.9), four points higher than the national average (62.8)

I am satisfied with the level of healthcare that is available to me



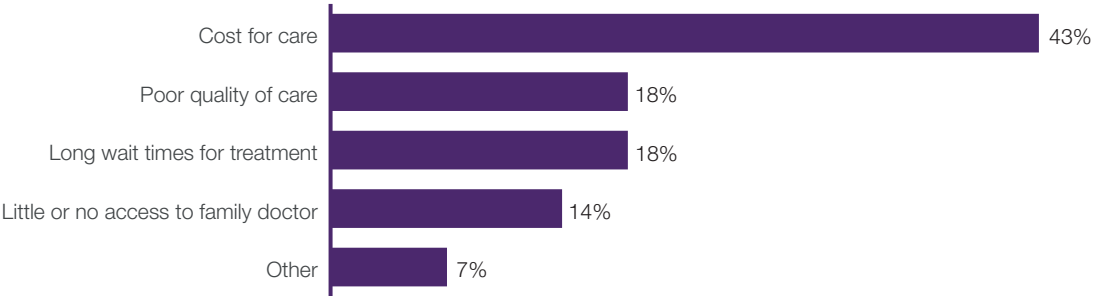
MHI score by “I am satisfied with the level of healthcare that is available to me”



Workers in Australia dissatisfied with the level of healthcare available were asked for the reason.

- More than two in five (43 per cent) are dissatisfied over the cost for care, and the mental health score of this group (47.0) is 16 points lower than the national average (62.8)
- Nearly one-third (32 per cent) are dissatisfied because of access to care; specifically, 18 per cent are dissatisfied because of long wait times for treatment and 14 per cent are dissatisfied because of little or no access to a family doctor
- The mental health scores of workers dissatisfied because of access to care are nine or more points lower than the national average (62.8)
- The mental health score of 18 per cent of workers reporting poor quality of care (46.3) is 16 points lower than the national average (62.8)
- Labourers are 70 per cent more likely than workers in service industries and 50 per cent more likely than office workers to report poor quality of care as the reason for dissatisfaction
- Parents are 70 per cent more likely than non-parents to report little or no access to family doctor as the reason for dissatisfaction

Reason for dissatisfaction



MHI score by “Reason for dissatisfaction”



Overview of the Mental Health Index by TELUS Health (formerly 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 April 3 and April 13, 2023.

Calculations

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





www.telushealth.com

