



# The Mental Health Index by TELUS Health.

Special report on physical health and wellbeing

Canada | April 2023



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# What you need to know for April 2023.

## 1. One-third of workers in Canada have a high mental health risk, more than double the pre-pandemic rate.

- At 64.6, the mental health of workers in Canada improved modestly from the prior month
- While depression, anxiety, isolation, and work productivity are worse than the prior month, the main driver of the slight improvement in mental health is greater optimism
- 32% have a high mental health risk, 43% have a moderate mental health risk, and 25% have a low mental health risk
- Mental health scores declined in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Newfoundland and Labrador; scores improved or remained unchanged in other provinces
- Labourers have a lower mental health score than service and office workers
- Managers and non-managers have nearly equal mental health scores

## 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 below workers reporting good mental health and 29 or more points below the national average
- Women are 70 per cent more likely than men to say their mental health is in decline
- Labourers are more likely to report their health is in decline than office workers 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



**hours or more of vigorous exercise per week**  
is the point where mental health scores increase



**are dissatisfied**  
with the level of available healthcare



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

### 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 30 or more points below workers reporting good physical health and 19 or more points below the national average
- 31 per cent of workers cite motivation and/or no energy as the barrier to exercising regularly
- 19 per cent do not exercise and the mental health score of this group is nine points below workers who exercise four or more times per week
- 13 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. One-third report better sleep would be most helpful in managing their physical health, followed by affordable nutritious foods.

- 81 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; however, better mental health scores are seen at 3.5 hours per week or more
- 10 per cent say managing their physical health starts with their mental health; this group has a mental health score 14 points lower than the national average
- 15 per cent of workers have a physical health issue that interferes with work
- Among workers with a physical health issue that interferes with work, 34 per cent say their employer is unaware, or are unsure whether their employer is aware, of their physical health issue

### 5. One in six workers are dissatisfied with the level of available healthcare.

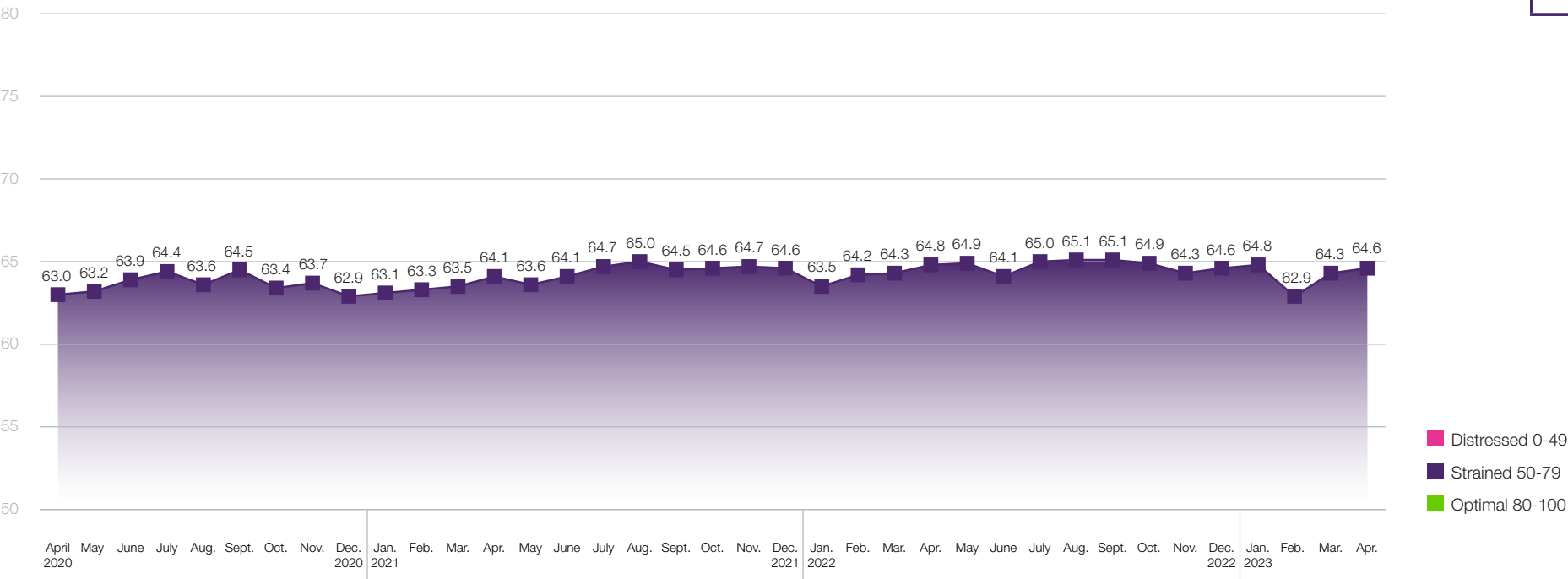
- The mental health score of workers dissatisfied with available healthcare is 13 points lower than satisfied workers and nine points lower than the national average
- Women are 50 per cent more likely than men to be dissatisfied with the level of available healthcare
- 38 per cent cite long wait times for treatment, 36 per cent cite little or no access to a family doctor
- 11 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 64.6. The mental health of workers in Canada improved modestly from the previous month.

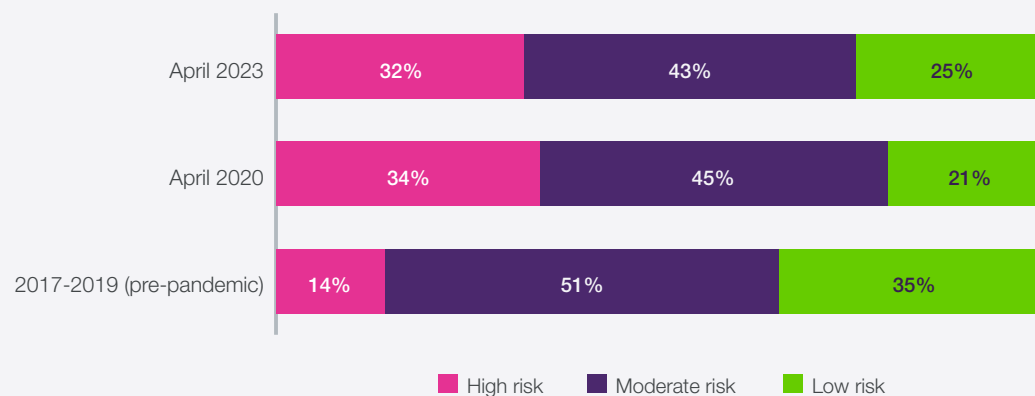
MHI Current Month April 2023	March 2023
64.6	64.3





## Mental health risk.

In April 2023, 32 per cent of workers in Canada have a high mental health risk, 43 per cent have a moderate mental health risk, and 25 per cent have a low mental health risk. Three years after the launch of the Index in April 2020, near the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been only a slight reduction in high-risk workers (2 per cent) and a modest (4 per cent) improvement 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 one year, the lowest Mental Health Index sub-score is for the risk measure of anxiety (57.0). Isolation (59.6), work productivity (60.7), depression (62.4), optimism (67.4), and financial risk (69.6) follow. General psychological health (72.6) continues to be the most favourable mental health measure in April 2023.

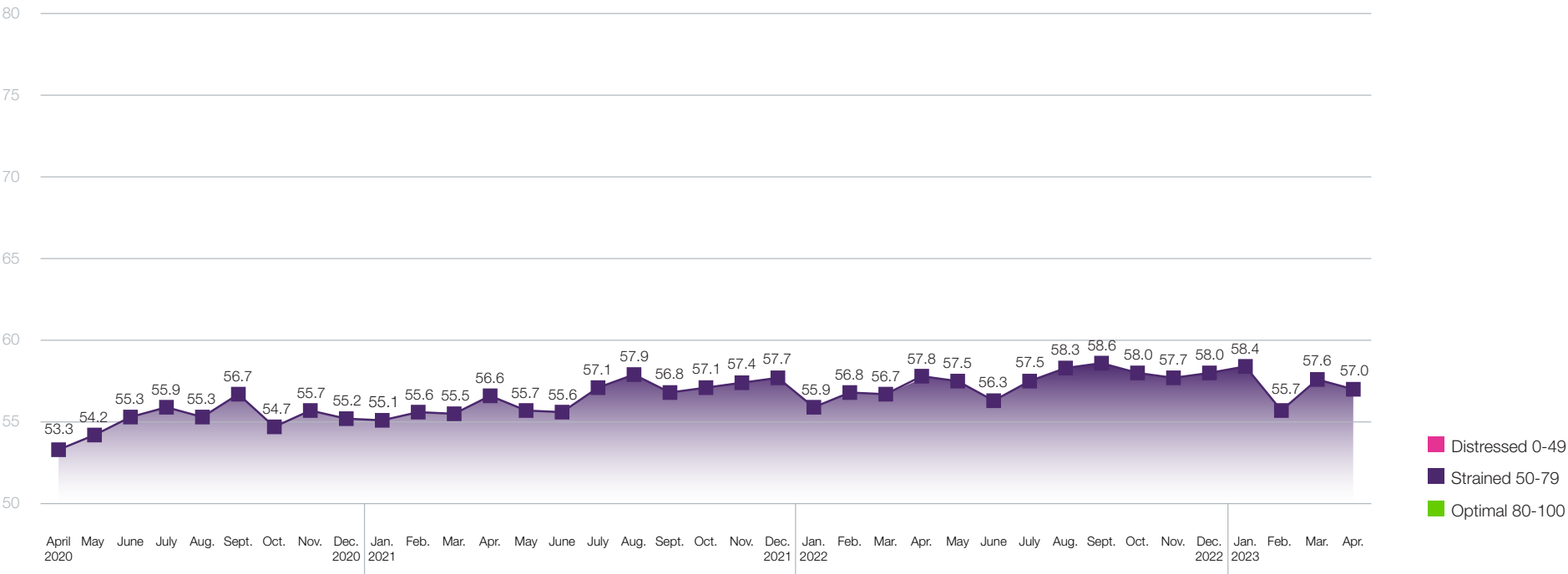
- Anxiety, isolation, and work productivity have been the lowest mental health sub-scores for 12 consecutive months
- Anxiety, depression, isolation, and work productivity sub-scores have declined compared to the prior month
- The greatest decline is observed in the work productivity sub-score, decreasing 1.8 points from March 2023

Mental Health Index Sub-scores	April 2023	March 2023
Anxiety	57.0	57.6
Isolation	59.6	60.6
Work productivity	60.7	62.5
Depression	62.4	62.8
Optimism	67.4	65.9
Financial risk	69.6	68.3
Psychological health	72.6	71.5



Anxiety

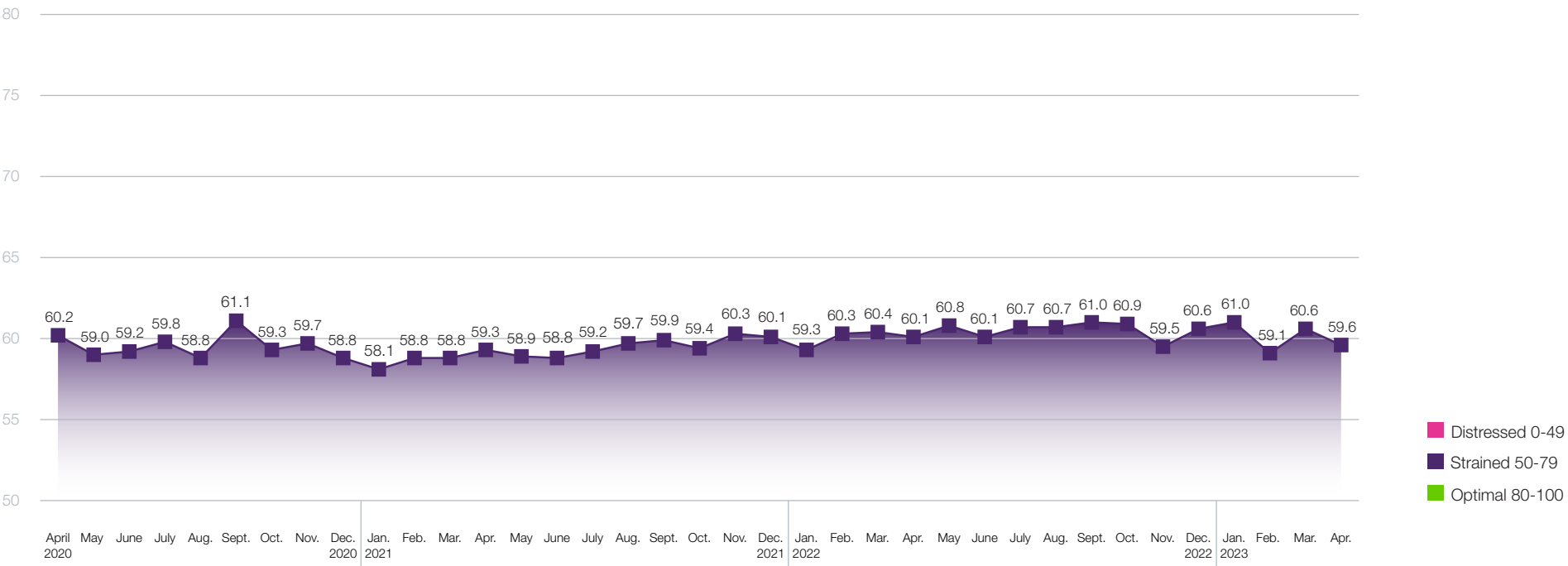
The anxiety sub-score has fluctuated since the launch of the Index in April 2020. After reaching its high in September 2022, the anxiety score declined through November. Following two months of modest improvements, the anxiety sub-score declined sharply in February 2023. A significant 1.9-point improvement was observed in March 2023. Following this notable improvement, the anxiety sub-score declined in April and continues to be the lowest across all mental health sub-scores for the 12th consecutive month.





Isolation

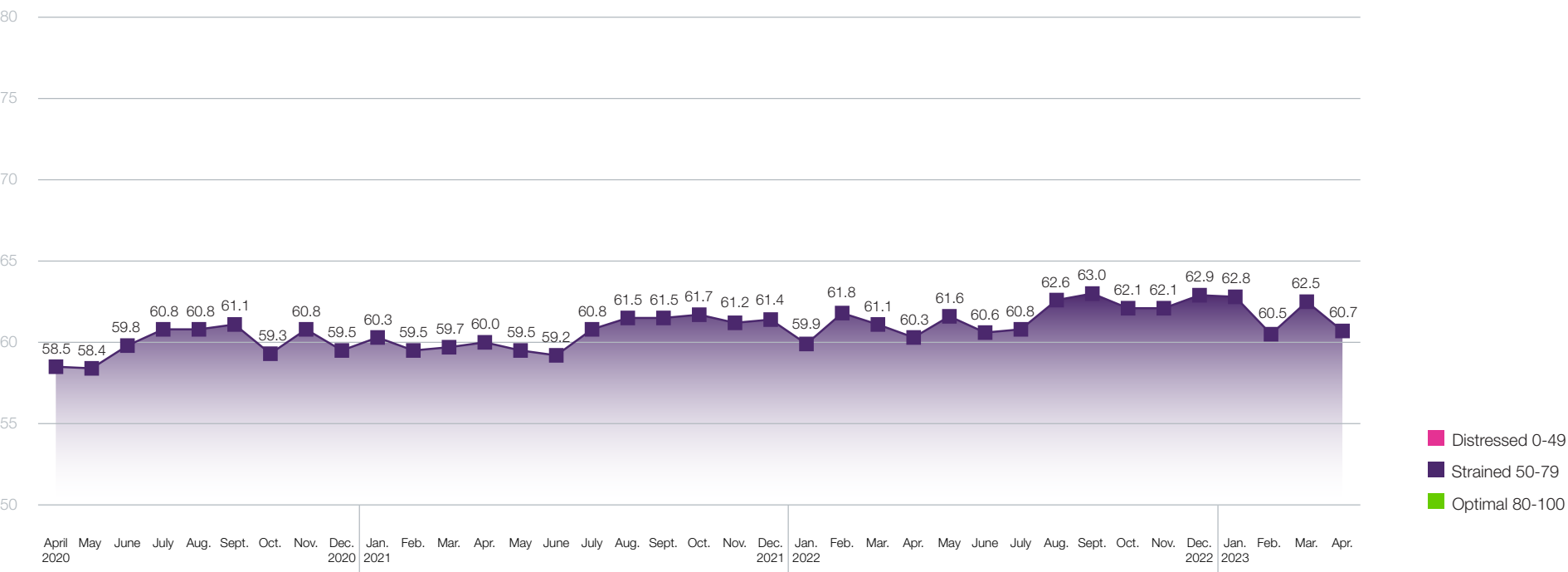
With only one notable increase, in September 2020, since the launch of the Index in April 2020, the isolation sub-score made incremental improvements through September 2022. Following a one-point decline in November, the isolation sub-score rebounded through January 2023. Following a sharp 1.9-point decline in February, the isolation score rebounded strongly in March 2023 but declined one point in April.



Work productivity

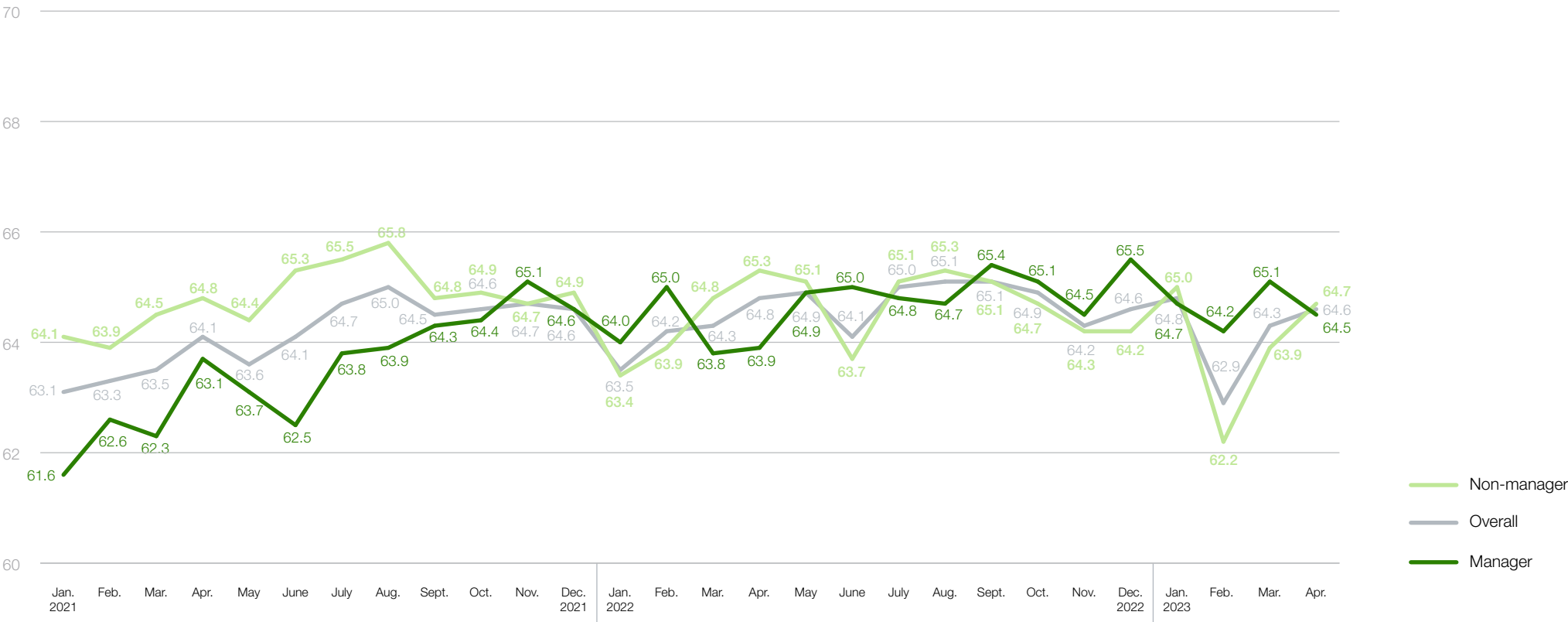
The work productivity sub-score measures the impact of mental health on work productivity and goals.

With multiple periods of improvement followed by declines, the work productivity score has been inconsistent from month to month since the launch of the MHI reports in April 2020. Overall, the impact of mental health on work productivity has shown general improvement. Similar to other sub-scores, the work productivity score declined sharply in February 2023 but recovered two points in March. In April 2023, the work productivity score declined sharply again, 1.8 points to 60.7.



Managers compared to non-managers.

From January to October 2021, the mental health scores of managers were lower than non-managers and lower than the Canadian average. In November 2021, this trend reversed with managers reporting a slightly higher average mental health score than non-managers. From March through May 2022, the mental health score of managers was lower than that of non-managers; however, this trend reversed again in June. Since July 2022, managers and non-managers have reported similar mental health scores. In February 2023, the mental health of managers and non-managers declined sharply but improved significantly in March. In April 2023, a decline in the mental health of managers is observed while the mental health of non-managers improved in line with the Canadian average.



## 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 62.3 compared to 66.9 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 (60.9) than individuals without children (66.2)

## Mental health by employment status.

- Overall, five per cent of respondents are unemployed<sup>1</sup> and eight per cent report reduced hours or reduced salary
- Individuals reporting reduced salary compared to the prior month have the lowest mental health score (51.4), followed by individuals working fewer hours (55.7), individuals not currently employed (62.2), and individuals with no change to salary or hours (65.7)
- Managers (64.5) and non-managers (64.7) have nearly equal mental health scores
- Labourers have a lower mental health score (61.0) than service (65.0) and office workers (65.4)
- Self-employed/sole proprietors have the highest mental health score (69.3)
- Respondents working for companies with 5,001-10,000 employees have the lowest mental health score (61.5)

## Emergency savings

- Workers without emergency savings continue to experience a lower score in mental health (50.7) than the overall group (64.6). Workers with emergency savings have a mental health score of 70.5

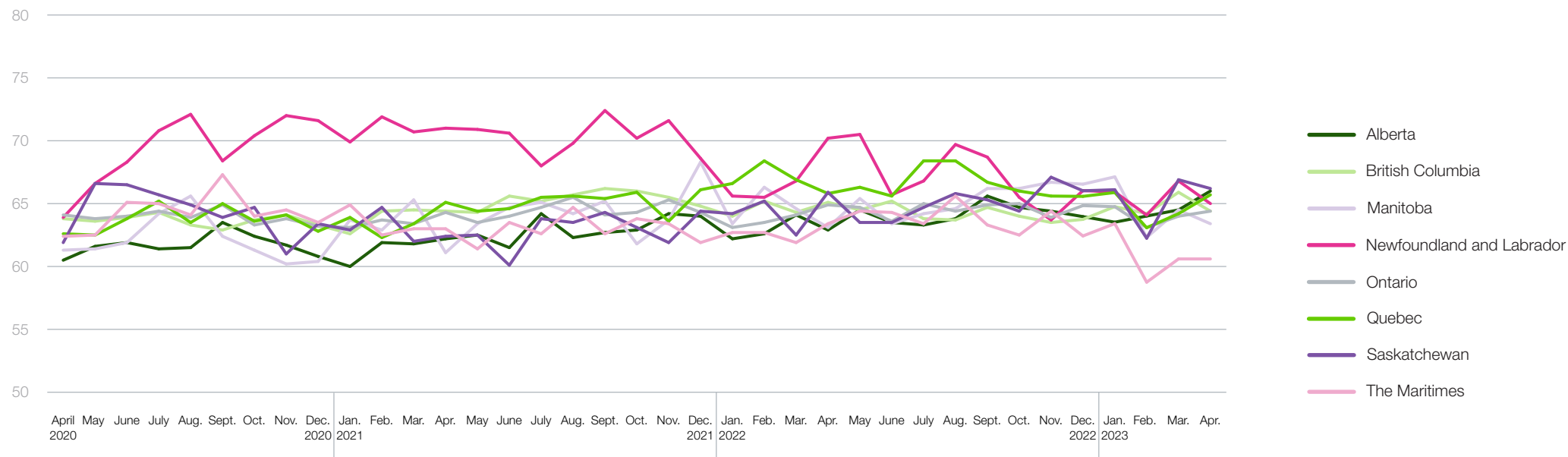


<sup>1</sup> MHI respondents who have been employed in the past six months are included in the poll.

# The Mental Health Index by province.

Since April 2020, provincial mental health scores have fluctuated. Apart from Newfoundland and Labrador, the fluctuation patterns for the provinces have been similar. In April 2023, the mental health scores in Alberta, Quebec, and Ontario have improved while scores in other provinces are unchanged or have declined compared to March 2023.

- The greatest improvements in mental health are in Alberta and Ontario, up 1.5 points from the prior month
- The Maritimes continues to have the lowest mental health score (60.6) and is unchanged from March 2023



Employment status	Apr. 2023	March 2023
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	65.7	65.3
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	55.7	55.1
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	51.4	51.1
Not currently employed	62.2	62.1

Age group	Apr. 2023	March 2023
Age 20-29	52.2	53.7
Age 30-39	58.1	58.5
Age 40-49	62.4	61.4
Age 50-59	66.3	65.8
Age 60-69	73.1	71.7

Number of children	Apr. 2023	March 2023
No children in household	66.2	65.5
1 child	60.0	61.1
2 children	62.2	61.0
3 children or more	61.5	64.8

Province	Apr. 2023	March 2023
Alberta	66.0	64.5
British Columbia	64.4	65.9
Manitoba	63.4	64.5
Newfoundland and Labrador	65.0	66.8
The Maritimes	60.6	60.6
Quebec	65.7	64.2
Ontario	64.4	64.0
Saskatchewan	66.2	66.9

Gender	Apr. 2023	March 2023
Men	66.9	67.0
Women	62.3	61.6

Household income	Apr. 2023	March 2023
<\$30K/annum	52.2	54.0
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	60.3	59.1
\$60K to <\$100K	64.0	63.8
\$100K to <\$150K	67.1	66.7
\$150K or more	69.7	71.2

Employer size	Apr. 2023	March 2023
Self-employed/sole proprietor	69.3	67.5
2-50 employees	64.2	64.0
51-100 employees	62.0	62.7
101-500 employees	64.8	64.4
501-1,000 employees	63.0	61.6
1,001-5,000 employees	66.3	66.9
5,001-10,000 employees	61.5	59.7
More than 10,000 employees	65.4	65.7

Manager	Apr. 2023	March 2023
Manager	64.5	65.1
Non-manager	64.7	63.9

Work environment	Apr. 2023	March 2023
Labour	61.0	-
Office/desk	65.4	-
Service	65.0	-

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.

Employees working in Information and Cultural Industries have the lowest mental health score (51.0) in April 2023, followed by individuals working in Administrative and Support services (55.6), and Food Services (58.1).

Respondents employed in the Automotive Industry (70.9), Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (70.6), and Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (69.7) have the highest mental health scores this month.

Changes from the prior month are shown in the table.



Industry	April 2023	March 2023	Change
Utilities	66.8	58.8	8.1
Media and Telecommunications	66.7	61.8	5.0
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	69.7	66.2	3.5
Automotive Industry	70.9	67.5	3.4
Warehousing	61.8	59.4	2.4
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	69.1	66.8	2.3
Retail Trade	64.8	63.0	1.8
Public Administration	67.9	66.4	1.5
Wholesale Trade	66.9	65.5	1.4
Technology	65.6	64.6	1.0
Health Care and Social Assistance	62.2	61.3	0.9
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	70.6	69.7	0.9
Construction	64.0	63.1	0.8
Educational Services	66.4	65.6	0.8
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	64.4	63.6	0.8
Other	62.7	62.1	0.6
Finance and Insurance	66.1	66.0	0.2
Management of Companies and Enterprises	68.5	68.7	-0.1
Manufacturing	66.8	67.0	-0.2
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	62.1	63.0	-0.8
Other services (except Public Administration)	61.2	63.4	-2.2
Food Services	58.1	61.4	-3.3
Transportation	66.2	69.9	-3.7
Administrative and Support services	55.6	59.6	-4.0
Accommodation	58.5	62.6	-4.1
Information and Cultural Industries	51.0	64.3	-13.3

# Spotlight

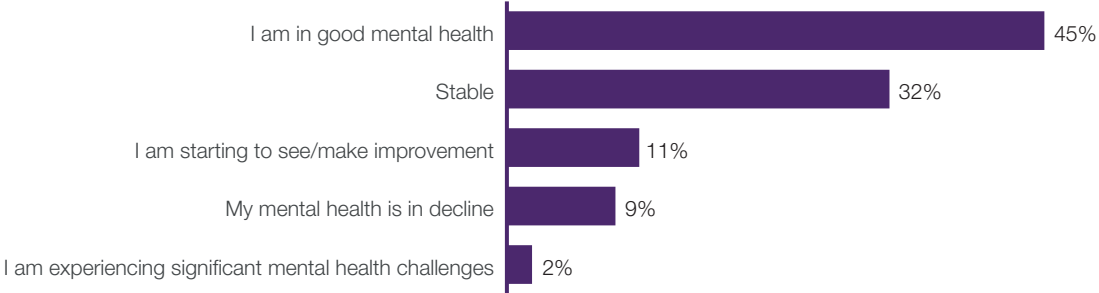
## Self-reported mental health.

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

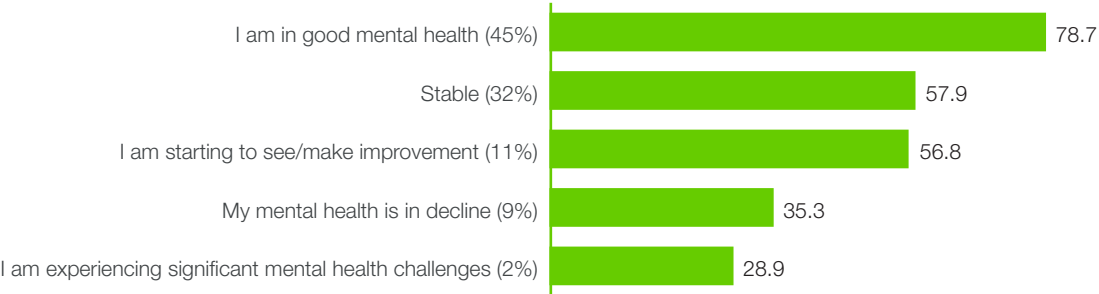
- More than one in ten (11 per cent) say their mental health is in decline or they are experiencing significant mental health challenges; workers in these categories have mental health scores 43 or more points lower than workers reporting good mental health and 29 or more points lower than the national average (64.6)
- Women are 70 per cent more likely than men to report their mental health is in decline
- Individuals working as labourers are 40 per cent more likely than office or service workers to report their mental health is in decline
- Workers under 40 are two and half times more likely than workers over 50 to report they are starting to see/make improvement in their mental health
- Nearly half (45 per cent) self-report good mental health; this group has the highest mental health score (78.7), 14 points higher than the national average (64.6)
- Workers older than 50 are 50 per cent more likely than workers under 40 to report being in good mental health



### Current mental health



### MHI score by “Current mental health”





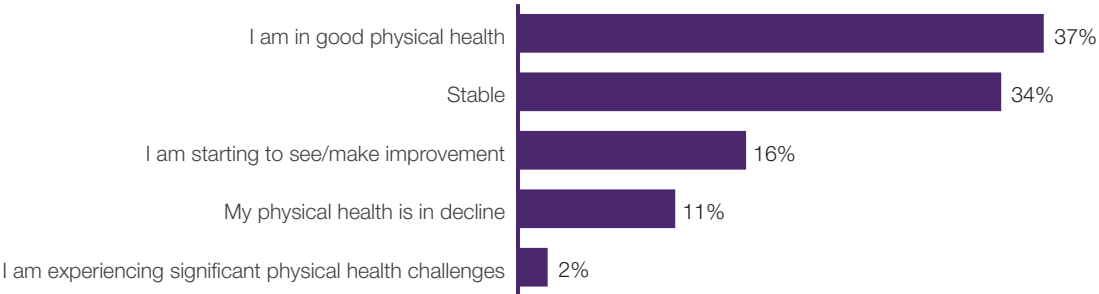
# Self-reported physical health.

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

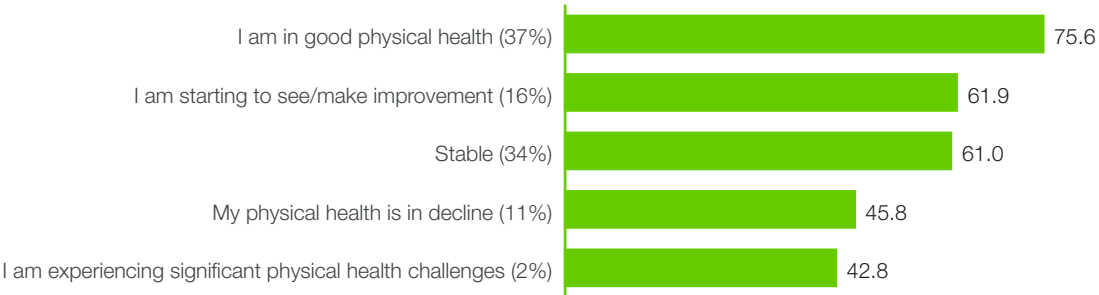
- More than one in ten (13 per cent) say their physical health is in decline or they are experiencing significant physical health challenges; workers in these categories have mental health scores 30 or more points lower than workers reporting good physical health and 19 or more points lower than the national average (64.6)
- 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
- Nearly two in five (37 per cent) self-report good physical health; this group has the highest mental health score (75.6), 11 points higher than the national average (64.6)



## Current physical health



## MHI score by “Current physical health”



# Physical health effect on mental health.

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

Four in five (81 per cent) believe that physical activity has a positive effect on their mental health; this group has the highest mental health score (66.3), nine points higher than workers who are neutral (57.0) and nearly two points above the national average (64.6).

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 Canada 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 the highest mental health score (65.5), six or more points higher than workers who are neutral or disagree, and one point above the national average (64.6).

**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”**

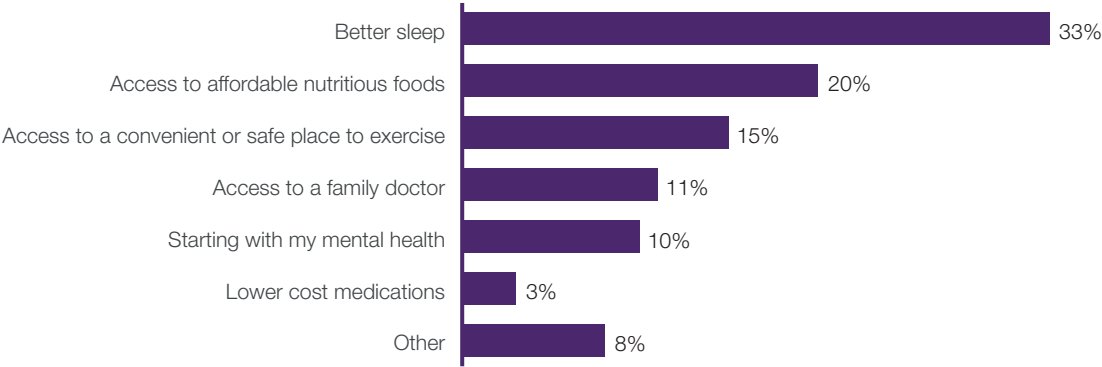


Workers in Canada were asked what would be most helpful in managing their physical health.

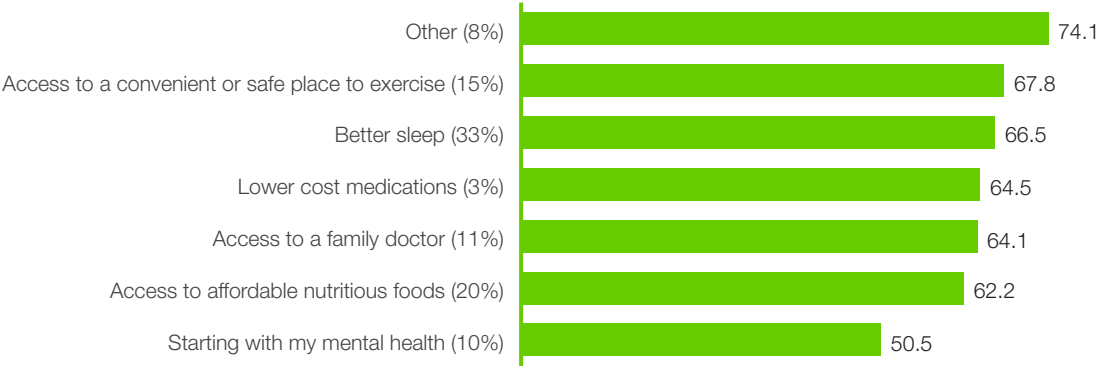
- One-third (33 per cent) report better sleep would be most helpful in managing their physical health, 20 per cent report access to affordable nutritious foods, 15 per cent report access to a convenient or safe place to exercise, and 11 per cent report access to a family doctor as most helpful in managing their physical health
- Ten 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 (50.5) is 14 points lower than the national average (64.6)
- 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 Canada were asked how frequently they exercise.

- Nearly one in five (19 per cent) do not exercise. The mental health score of this group (61.2) is nine points lower than workers who exercise four or more times per week (70.1) and three points lower than the national average (64.6)
- Non-parents are nearly twice as likely as parents to report not exercising
- Workers over 50 years are 70 per cent more likely than workers under 40 to report not exercising
- More than one-quarter (26 per cent) exercise four or more times per week; this group has the highest mental health score (70.1), more than five points higher than the national average (64.6)



## How frequently do you exercise?



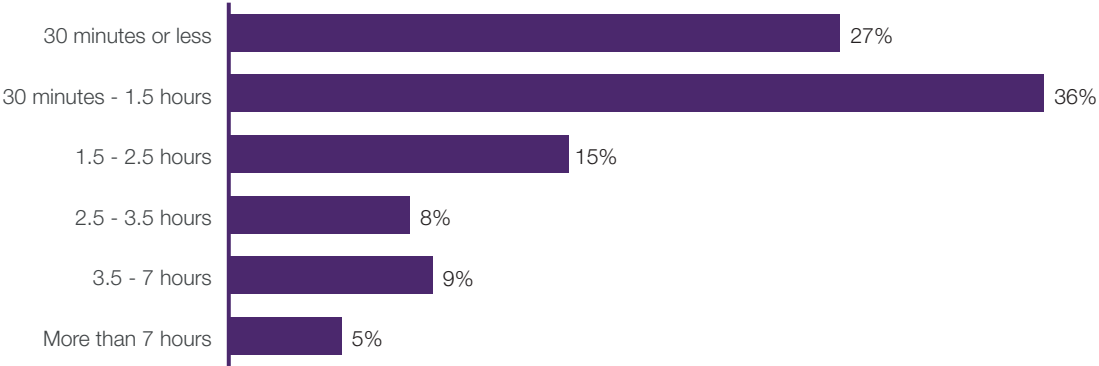
## MHI score by “How frequently do you exercise?”



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

The highest mental health score (73.0) is among nine per cent of workers reporting 3.5-7 hours of moderate to vigorous exercise per week. The mental health score of this group (73.0) is 11 points higher than workers who report 30 minutes or less of moderate to vigorous exercise (62.2) and more than eight points higher than the national average (64.6).

Total duration of moderate to vigorous exercise



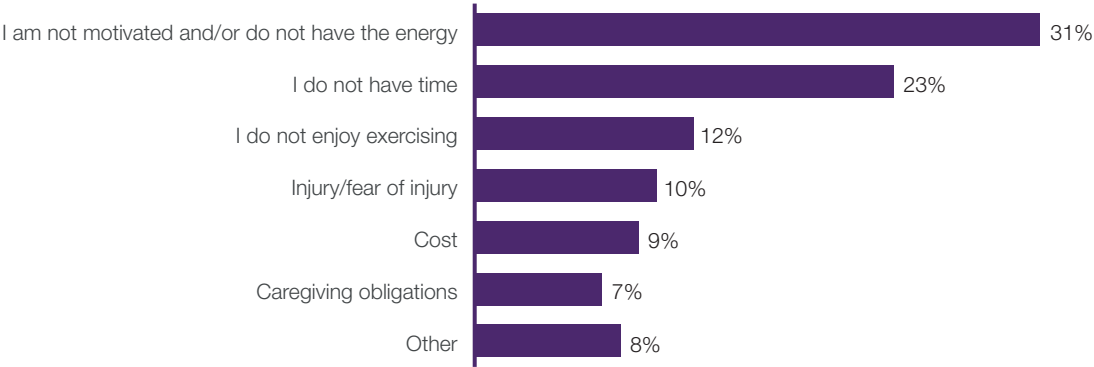
MHI score by “Total duration of moderate to vigorous exercise”



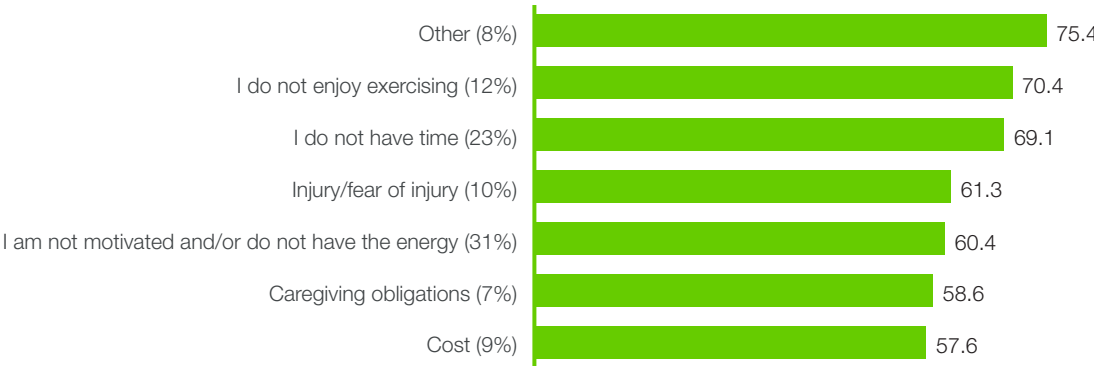
Workers in Canada were asked about the biggest barrier to exercising regularly.

- Nearly one-third (31 per cent) are not motivated and/or do not have the energy to exercise and 23 per cent say they do not have time to exercise regularly
- Nearly one in ten (nine per cent) say cost is the biggest barrier to exercising regularly; this group has the lowest mental health score (57.6), seven points lower than the national average (64.6)
- Parents are 40 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 service workers to report injury/fear of injury as the biggest barrier to exercising regularly
- Non-parents are three times more likely than parents to report not enjoying exercising

Biggest barrier to exercising regularly



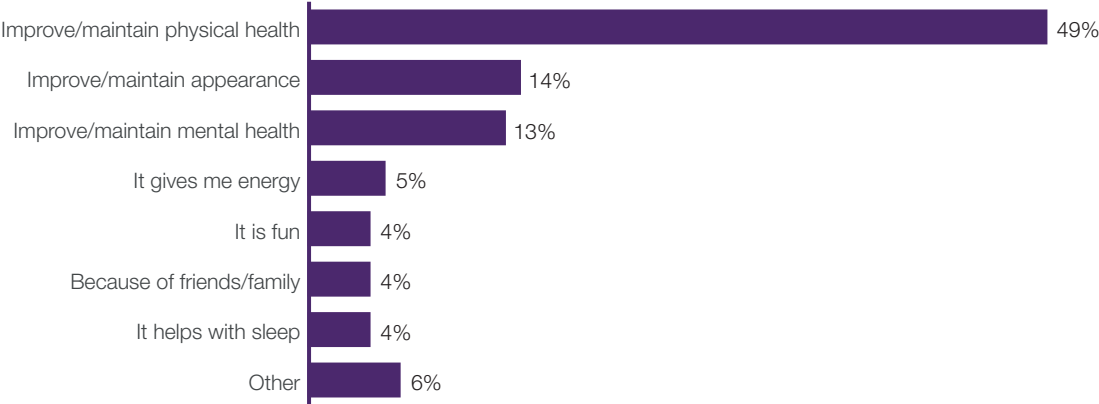
MHI score by “Biggest barrier to exercising regularly”



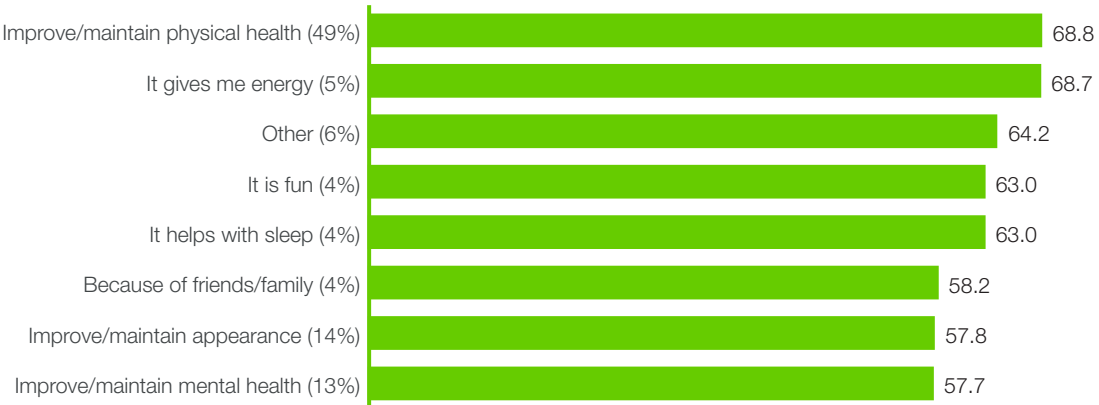
Workers in Canada were asked about the primary reason they exercise.

- Nearly half (49 per cent) exercise to improve/maintain physical health; this group has the highest mental health score (68.8), four points higher than the national average (64.6)
- Workers over 50 are 50 per cent more likely than workers under 40 to exercise to improve/maintain their physical health
- More than one in ten (13 per cent) exercise to improve/maintain their mental health; this group has the lowest mental health score (57.7), seven points lower than the national average (64.6)
- Parents are 70 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 (57.8) is seven points lower than the national average (64.6)
- Workers under 40 are two and half times more likely than workers over 50 to report exercising to improve/maintain their appearance
- Women are 50 per cent more likely than men to exercise 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 Canada were asked whether they have a physical health issue that interferes with work.

- Nearly one in six (15 per cent) have a physical health issue that interferes with work; this group has a mental health score (51.1) 16 points lower than workers not reporting a physical health issue that interferes with work (66.9) and 13 points lower than the national average (64.6)
- Labourers are more than twice as likely as office workers and 50 per cent more likely than workers in service industries to have a physical health issue that interferes with work
- Parents are 50 per cent more likely than non-parents to have a physical health issue that interferes with their 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 Canada reporting a physical health issue that interferes with their work were asked whether their employer is aware of the issue.

- More than one in seven (15 per cent) report their employer is unaware of their physical health issue; the mental health score of this group (47.1) is more than 17 points lower than the national average (64.6) and six points lower than workers whose employers are aware of their physical health issue
- Nearly one in five (19 per cent) are unsure whether their employer is aware of their physical health issue that impacts work. The mental health score of this group (48.0) is nearly 17 points lower than the national average (64.6)
- Two-thirds (66 per cent) report their employer is aware of their physical health issue; despite this, the mental health score of this group (52.9) is nearly 13 points lower than the national average (64.6)

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?”

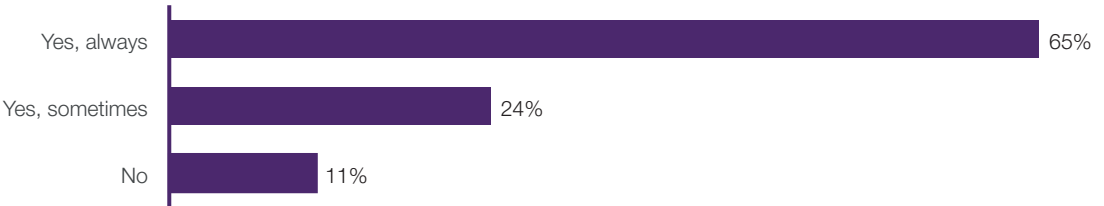


Workers in Canada whose employers are aware of their physical health issue that interferes with work were asked whether their employer is helpful in managing work.

- More than one in ten (11 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 (46.2) is more than 18 points below the national average (64.6) and nearly nine points lower than workers whose employers are always helpful (54.9)
- Women are nearly twice as likely as 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 14 or more points lower than the national average (64.6)



**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?”**

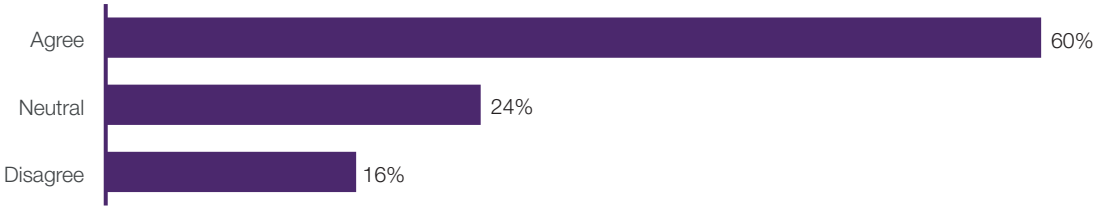


# Satisfaction with healthcare.

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

- One in six (16 per cent) are dissatisfied with the level of healthcare available; the mental health of this group is lowest (55.5), 13 points lower than workers who are satisfied (68.7) and nine points lower than the national average (64.6)
- Women are nearly 50 per cent more likely than men to report being dissatisfied with the level of healthcare available
- Three in five (60 per cent) are satisfied with the level of healthcare available; this group has the highest mental health score (68.7), four points higher than the national average (64.6)

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



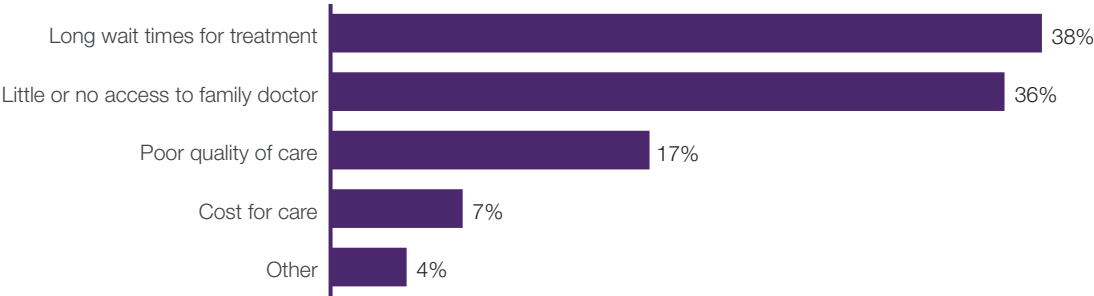
MHI score by “I am satisfied with the level of healthcare that is available to me”



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

- Nearly three-quarters (74 per cent) are dissatisfied because of access to care; specifically, 38 per cent are dissatisfied because of long wait times for treatment and 36 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 six or more points lower than the national average (64.6)
- The mental health score of 17 per cent of workers reporting poor quality of care is 15 points lower than the national average (64.6)
- Labourers are 70 per cent more likely than workers in service industries and nearly 50 per cent more likely than office workers to report poor quality of care as the reason for dissatisfaction
- The mental health score of seven per cent of workers reporting dissatisfaction over the cost for care (48.2) is more than 16 points lower than the national average (64.6)
- Workers under 40 are nearly two and half times more likely than workers over 50 to report cost of care 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 3,000 people who live in Canada 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 Canada. 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.

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