



# The Mental Health Index by TELUS Health (formerly LifeWorks).

New Zealand | January 2023

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# What you need to know for January 2023.

## 1. The mental health of working New Zealanders is significantly strained.

- 36% of New Zealanders have a high mental health risk, 47% have a moderate mental health risk, and 18% have a low mental health risk
- Anxiety, financial risk, and isolation are the lowest mental health sub-scores
- The mental health score of managers is higher than the score of non-managers and the national average
- The regions with the lowest mental health scores are Otago/Southland (58.7), Mānawatu-Whanganui/Taranaki (58.7), and Bay of Plenty (59.7). Northland has the highest mental health score (64.2), followed by Canterbury (64.1), and Gisborne/Hawke's Bay (63.9)

## 2. Nearly two of five New Zealanders avoid being with or interacting with others and this behaviour largely started or worsened since the pandemic.

- The mental health score of respondents who avoid being with or interacting with others is more than 10 points below the national average
- 52% say their avoidance started or worsened since the pandemic began
- 25% of New Zealanders have difficulty controlling their emotions and the mental health score of this group is more than 16 points below the national average
- 48% say difficulty controlling their emotions started or worsened since the pandemic began
- Younger respondents (under 40 years of age) are more than twice as likely as individuals over 50 years of age to avoid being with or interacting with others and to have difficulty controlling their emotions



### 3. More than one-quarter of New Zealanders have cut back on health-related expenses due to inflation.

- 65% have cut back on discretionary spending
- 43% are staying home more
- 27% have cut back on expense related to their health
- 7% have cut back on prescription medication
- Parents are 70% more likely than non-parents to cut back on expenses related to their health
- Individuals without emergency savings are nearly twice as likely to cut back on prescription medication or expenses related to their health compared to individuals with emergency savings
- The mental health score of respondents who cut back on prescription medications is more than 13 points below the national average; respondents who cut back on expenses related to their health have a mental health score more than eight points below the national average

### 4. Nearly one-third of New Zealanders say financial pressure is the reason for a decline in their marital/partner relationship.

- One in eight New Zealanders report a decline in the marital/personal relationships since the pandemic began
- 32% say financial pressure is the reason for a decline in their marital/partner relationship
- The mental health score of respondents indicating that their marital/partner relationship has declined because of financial pressure is more than 15 points below the national average
- Parents are more than twice as likely as non-parents to report financial pressure as the reason for a decline in their relationship

### 5. More than one in four parents would most value mental health support for their children 18 years of age and older.

- 26% of parents with children under 18 years of age are concerned about their children's behaviour; among them, 55% say the behaviour started or worsened since the pandemic
- 14% of parents with children 18 years of age and older are concerned about their children's behaviour; among them, 44% say the behaviour started or worsened since the pandemic
- The mental health and work productivity scores of parents concerned about their children's behaviour are lower than parents not concerned about their children's behaviour
- 38% of parents with children under 18 years of age say flexible work is most valued support from their employer as it relates to the wellbeing of their children
- 26% of parents with children 18 years of age and older and 15% of parents with children under 18 years of age most value mental health support for their children

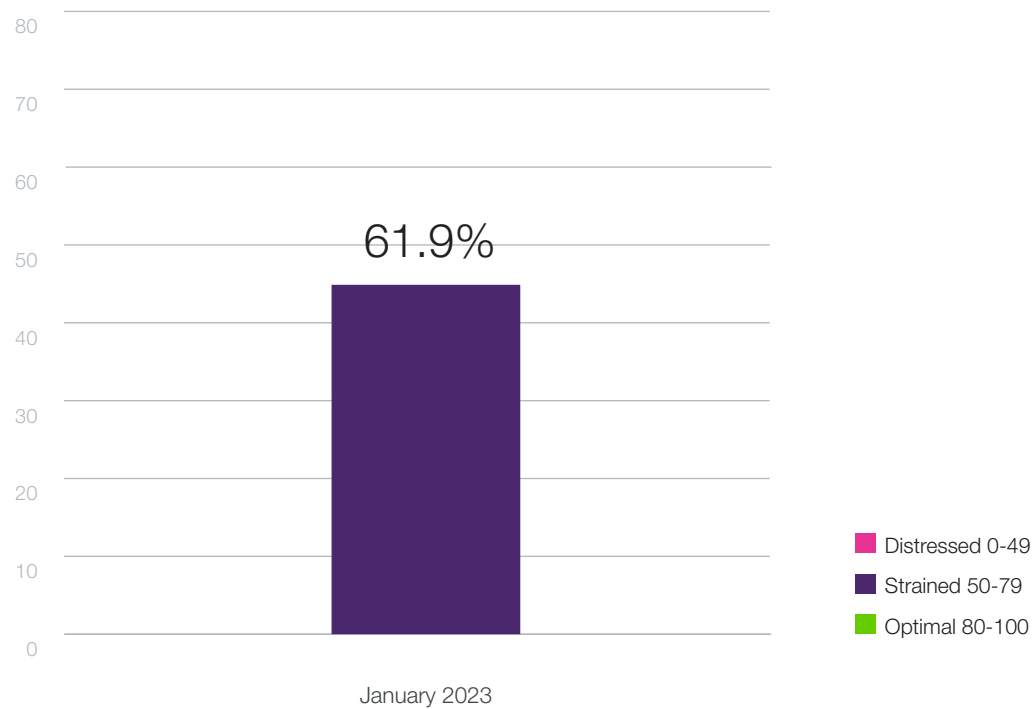


# The Mental Health Index.

The overall Mental Health Index for January 2023 is 61.9.  
A score in this range reflects significant mental strain in the population.

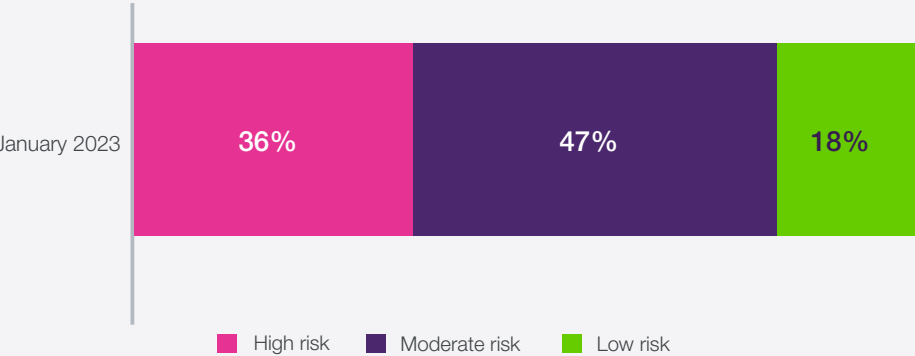
MHI Current Month  
January 2023

61.9



**Mental health risk.**

In January 2023, 36 per cent of New Zealanders have a high mental health risk, 47 per cent have a moderate mental health risk, and 18 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.



**Mental Health Index sub-scores.**

The lowest Mental Health Index sub-score is anxiety (54.7). Financial risk (58.2), isolation (59.5), depression (61.0), work productivity (63.0), and optimism follow (66.8) follow. General psychological health (70.1) is the most favourable mental health measure in January 2023.

Mental Health Index sub-scores <sup>1</sup>	January 2023
Anxiety	54.7
Financial risk	58.2
Isolation	59.5
Depression	61.0
Work productivity	63.0
Optimism	66.8
Psychological health	70.1



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

## Demographics

- Women have a significantly lower mental health score than men. In January 2023, the mental health score of women is 60.0 compared to 64.8 for men
- Mental health scores improve with age
- Differences in mental health scores between individuals with and without children is evident. Individuals with at least one child have a lower score (59.5) than individuals without children (63.3)

## Employment

- Overall, three per cent of respondents are unemployed<sup>2</sup> and 11 per cent report reduced hours or reduced salary
- Individuals working fewer hours compared to the prior month have the lowest mental health score (55.7), followed by respondents not currently employed (59.7), individuals with no change to salary or hours (62.6), and respondents reporting reduced salary (62.8)
- Managers have a higher mental health score (63.3) than non-managers (61.3)
- Respondents working for companies with 101-500 employees have the highest mental health score (64.0)
- Respondents working for companies with 1,001-5,000 employees have the lowest mental health score (60.0)

## Emergency savings

- Individuals without emergency savings experience a lower mental health score (51.3) than the overall group (61.9). Individuals with emergency savings have a mental health score of 68.7

<sup>2</sup> MHI respondents who have been employed in the past six months are included in the poll.



Employment status	Jan. 2023
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	62.6
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	55.7
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	62.8
Not currently employed	59.7

Age group	Jan. 2023
Age 20-29	55.5
Age 30-39	58.9
Age 40-49	60.8
Age 50-59	66.7
Age 60-69	72.9

Number of children	Jan. 2023
No children in household	63.3
1 child	58.9
2 children	61.0
3 children or more	57.4

Region	Jan. 2023
Auckland	61.4
Bay of Plenty	59.7
Canterbury	64.1
Gisborne and Hawke's Bay	63.9

Manawatū-Whanganui and Taranaki	58.7
Marlborough, Nelson, Tasman, and West Coast	62.5
Northland	64.2
Otago and Southland	58.7
Waikato	63.6
Wellington	62.6

Gender	Jan. 2023
Men	64.8
Women	60.0

Household income	Jan. 2023
\$30K/annum	56.6
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	55.3
\$60k to <\$100K/annum	61.7
\$100K to \$150K/annum	64.4
\$150K and over/annum	67.1

Employer size	Jan. 2023
Self-employed/sole proprietor	63.1
2-50 employees	62.5
51-100 employees	60.1
101-500 employees	64.0
501-1,000 employees	60.7
1,001-5,000 employees	60.0
5,001-10,000 employees	61.3
More than 10,000 employees	63.0

Manager	Jan. 2023
Manager	63.3
Non-manager	61.3

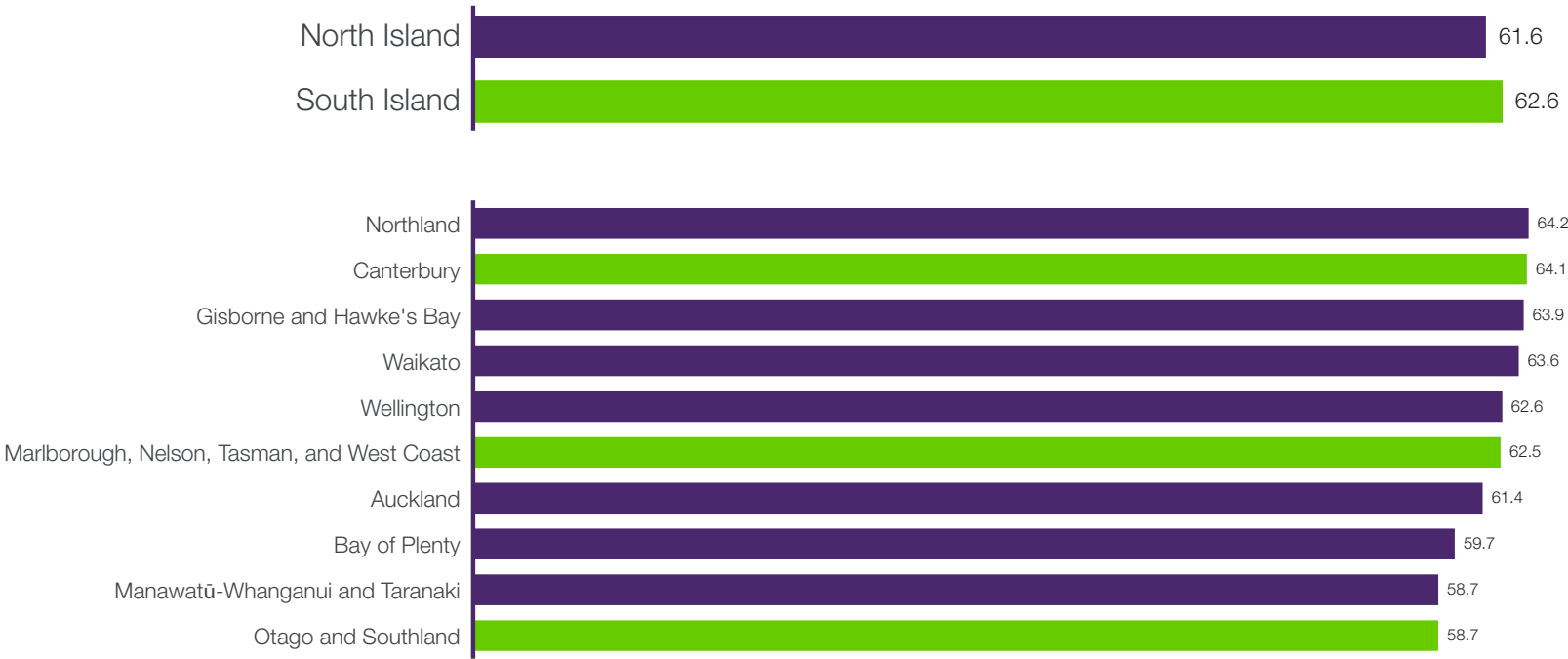
Numbers highlighted in pink are the most negative scores in the group.

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

# Mental Health Index (regional).

Mental health scores in all regions of New Zealand are significantly strained though mental health scores in the South Island (62.6) are slightly better than New Zealanders in the North Island (61.6).

The regions with the lowest mental health scores are Otago/Southland (58.7), Manawatū-Whanganui/Taranaki (58.7), and Bay of Plenty (59.7). Northland has the highest mental health score (64.2), followed by Canterbury (64.1), and Gisborne/Hawke’s Bay (63.9).



# Mental Health Index (industry).

The lowest mental health score in January 2023 is among individuals employed in Food Services (51.2) followed by individuals working in Administrative and Support services (54.3), and Media and Telecommunications (54.3).

New Zealanders employed in Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (68.1), Educational Services (67.4), and Real Estate, Rental and Leasing (67.4) have the highest mental health scores this month.

Changes from the prior month are shown in the table.  
Spotlight



Industry	January 2023
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	68.1
Educational Services	67.4
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	67.4
Public Administration	66.3
Technology	65.6
Wholesale Trade	65.5
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	65.4
Transportation and Warehousing	63.9
Finance and Insurance	63.5
Health Care and Social Assistance	62.8
Construction	62.1
Manufacturing	60.6
Other	59.5
Other services (except Public Administration)	59.4
Retail Trade	58.8
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	55.5
Media and Telecommunications	54.3
Administrative and Support services	54.3
Food Services	51.2

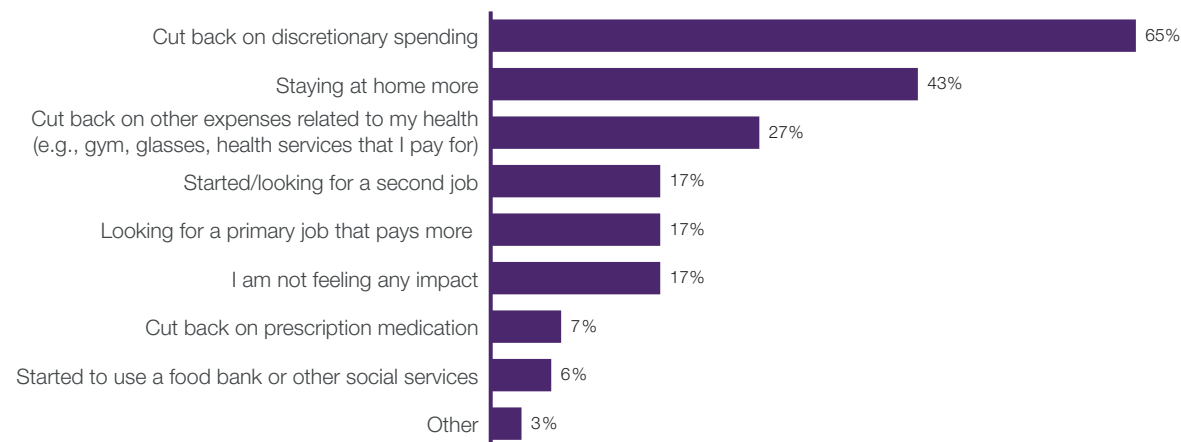
# Spotlight

## Inflation

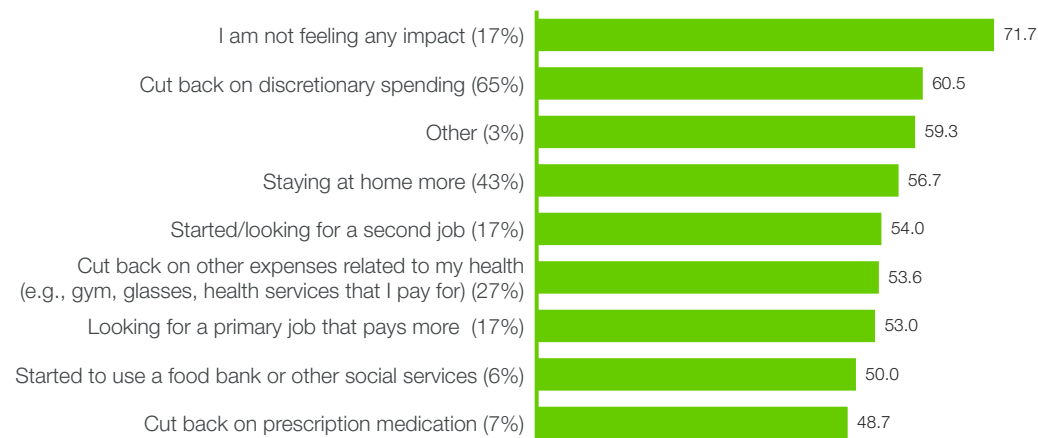
New Zealanders were asked about the impact they have experienced because of inflation.

- Nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) have cut back on discretionary spending, 43 per cent are staying at home more often, and 27 per cent have cut back on expenses related to their health
- Nearly one in five (17 per cent) are not feeling any impact, and this group has the highest mental health score (71.7), nearly 10 points above the national average (61.9)
- Parents are 70 per cent more likely than non-parents to cut back on expenses related to their health
- Individuals under the age of 40 are 80 per cent more likely to cut back on prescription medication compared with individuals 50 years of age and older
- Individuals under the age of 40 are three times more likely to have started or are looking for a second job compared with individuals 50 years of age and older
- Individuals without emergency savings are three times more likely to cut back on prescription medication compared to respondents with emergency savings
- Individuals without emergency savings are nearly twice as likely to cut back on expenses related to their health compared to respondents without emergency savings
- Individuals with emergency savings are more than twice as likely to not feel any impact due to inflation compared to individuals without emergency savings

### Impact experienced due to inflation.



### MHI score by “Impact experienced due to inflation.”



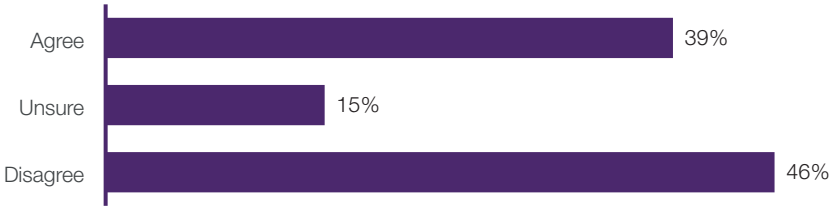
# Avoidance

New Zealanders were asked whether they avoid being with or interacting with others.

- Nearly two in five (39 per cent) avoid being with or interacting with others, and this group has the lowest mental health score (51.5), more than 10 points below the national average (64.8).
- More than half (52 per cent) do not avoid being with or interacting with others, and this group has the highest mental health score (72.2), 10 points above the national average
- Respondents under 40 years of age are more than twice as likely as individuals over 50 to avoid being with or interacting with others
- More than half (52 per cent) report their avoidance started or worsened since the pandemic began, and this group has the lowest mental health score (48.2), more than 13 points below the national average (61.9)



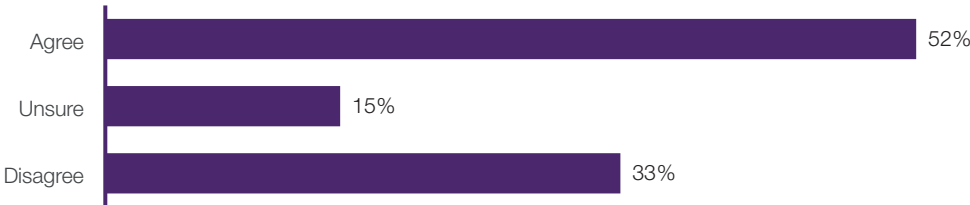
## I avoid being with or interacting with others.



## MHI score by “I avoid being with or interacting with others.”



## This avoidance started or worsened since the pandemic began.



## MHI score by “This avoidance started or worsened since the pandemic began.”

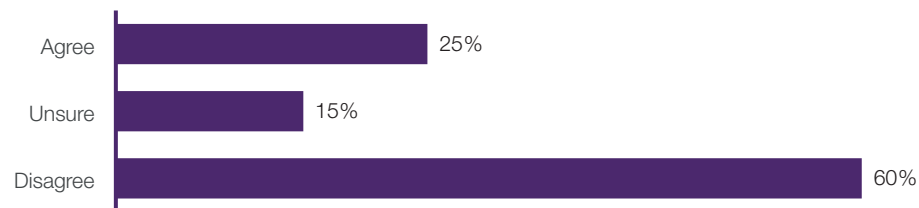


## Control

New Zealanders were asked whether they often have difficulty controlling their emotions.

- One-quarter (25 per cent) often have difficulty controlling their emotions, and this group has the lowest mental health score (45.5), more than 16 points below the national average (61.9)
- Three in five (60 per cent) do not have difficulty controlling their emotions, and this group has highest mental health score (70.2), more than eight points above the national average (61.9)
- Respondents under 40 years of age are more than twice as likely as individuals over 50 to have difficulty controlling their emotions
- Individuals without emergency savings are twice as likely as respondents with emergency savings to have difficulty controlling their emotions
- Nearly half (48 per cent) report the difficulty controlling their emotions started or worsened since the pandemic began, and this group has the lowest mental health score (43.7), nearly 19 points below the national average (61.9)

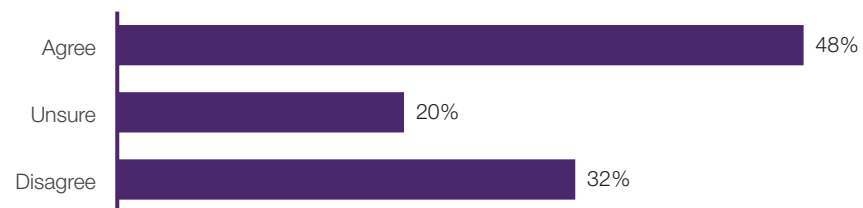
### I often have difficulty controlling my emotions.



### MHI score by "I often have difficulty controlling my emotions."



### This difficulty started or worsened since the pandemic began.



### MHI score by "This difficulty started or worsened since the pandemic began."



# Marital/partner relationships

New Zealanders were asked how their marital/partner relationship has changed compared to before the pandemic.

- Thirteen per cent indicate their marital/partner relationship has declined compared to before the pandemic, and this group has the lowest mental health score (48.3), nearly 14 points below the national average (61.9)
- Nearly one in five (18 per cent) report their marital/partner relationship has improved compared to before the pandemic, and this group has a mental health score (64.9) three points above the national average (61.9)
- More than two-thirds (69 per cent) indicate that nothing has changed in their marital/partner relationship compared to before the pandemic, and this group has the highest mental health score (64.9), three points above the national average (61.9).
- Respondents under 40 years of age are nearly three times more likely than individuals over 50 years of age to report their marital/partner relationship has improved compared to before the pandemic



Change in marital/partner relationship compared to before the pandemic.

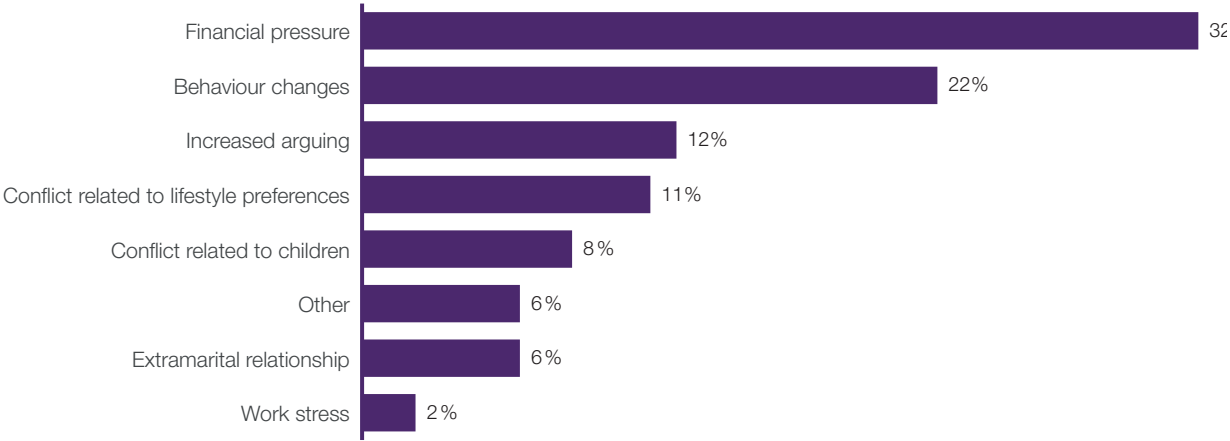


MHI score by “Change in marital/partner relationship compared to before the pandemic.”

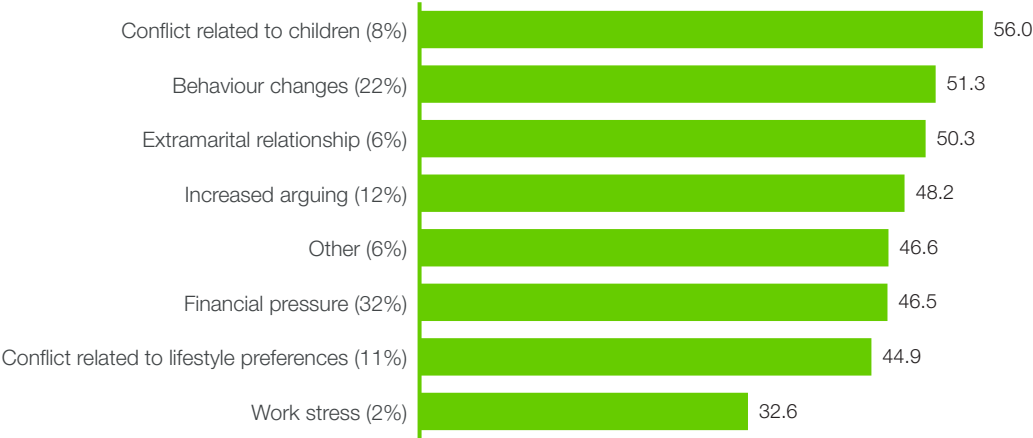


- New Zealanders reporting a decline in their marital/partner relationship were asked for the reasons.
- Nearly one-third (32 per cent) report financial pressure, 22 per cent report behaviour changes, 12 per cent report increased arguing, and 11 per cent report conflict related to lifestyle preferences as reasons for a decline in their relationship
  - Respondents under 40 years of age are 40 per cent more likely than individuals 50 years of age and older to report conflict related to children as the reason for a decline in their relationship
  - Men are nearly three times more likely than women to report conflict related to children as the reason for a decline in their relationship
  - Parents are more than twice as likely as non-parents to report financial pressure as the reason for a decline in their relationship

Reason for a decline in marital/partner relationship.



MHI score by “Reason for a decline in marital/partner relationship.”





## Wellbeing of children

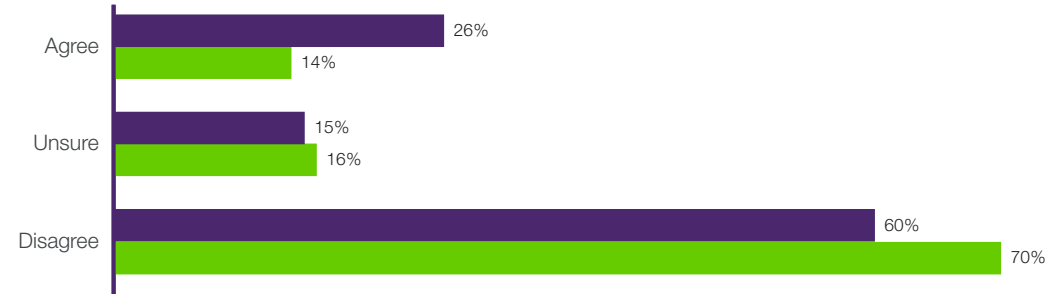
Parents were asked whether they are concerned about their children's behaviour.

- More than one-quarter (26 per cent) of parents with children under 18 years of age are concerned about their children's behaviour, compared to 14 per cent of parents with children 18 years of age and older
- The mental health and work productivity scores of parents concerned about their children's behaviour are lower than parents not concerned about their children's behaviour
- Parents with children 18 years of age and older have better mental health and work productivity scores than parents with children under 18 years of age



■ Parents with children under 18 years old  
■ Parents whose children are 18 or older

### My child or children are experiencing behaviour that I am concerned about.



### MHI score by “My child or children are experiencing behaviour that I am concerned about.”



### Work productivity score by “My child or children are experiencing behaviour that I am concerned about.”

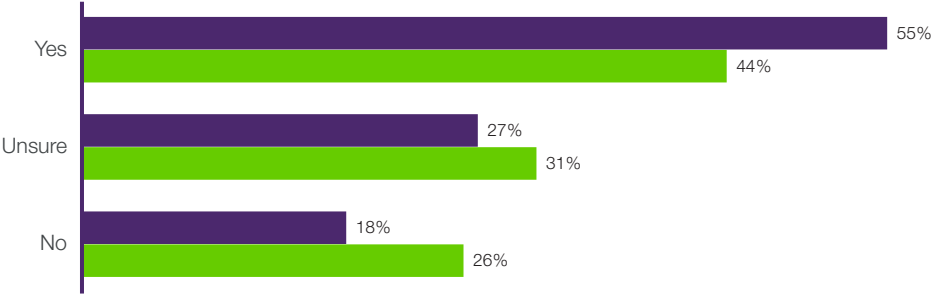


More than half (55 per cent) of parents with children under 18 years of age report the behaviour started or worsened since the pandemic began, compared to 44 per cent of parents with children 18 years of age and older. The mental health and work productivity scores of parents reporting this behaviour started or worsened since the pandemic began are lower than parents who disagree.



- Parents with children under 18 years old
- Parents whose children are 18 or older

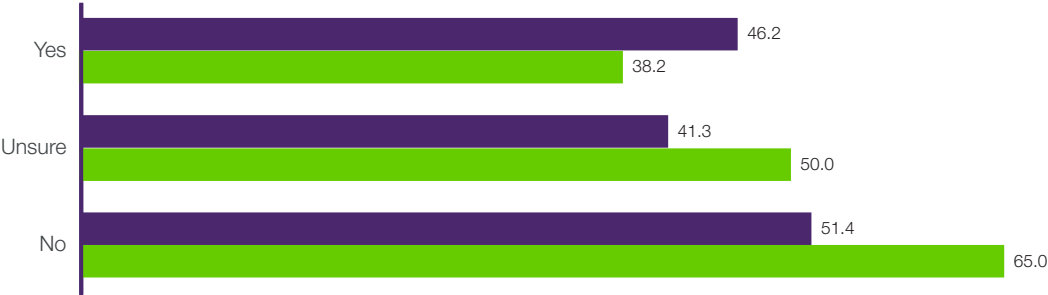
**This behaviour started or worsened since the pandemic.**



**MHI score by “This behaviour started or worsened since the pandemic.”**



**Work productivity score by “This behaviour started or worsened since the pandemic.”**

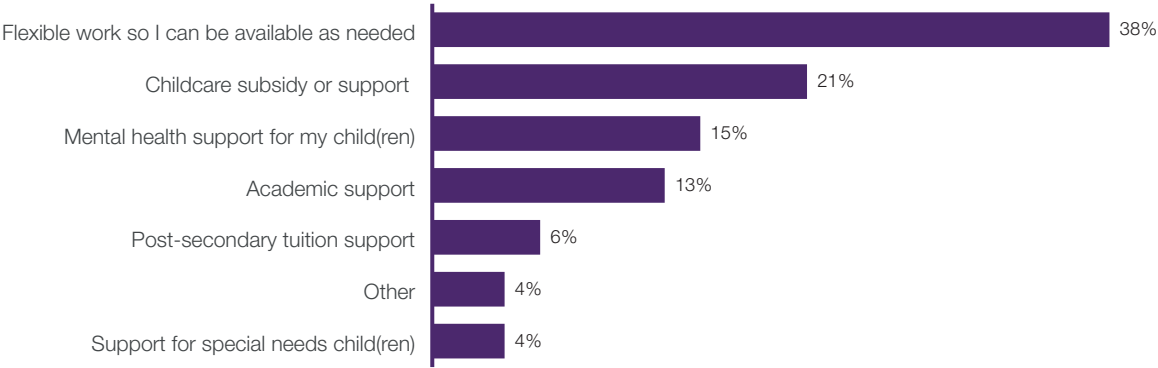


Parents were asked what would be most valuable as it relates to the wellbeing of their children.

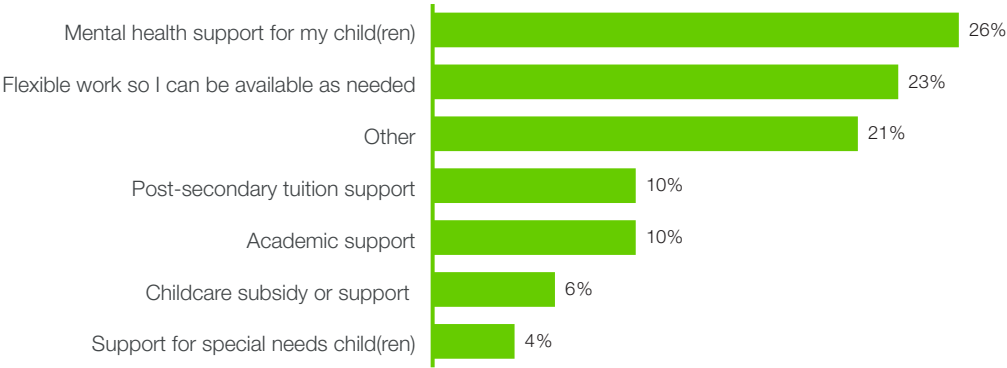
- More than one-third (38 per cent) of parents with children under 18 years of age report flexible work as most valued for the wellbeing of their children, 21 per cent report childcare subsidy or support, and 15 per cent report mental health support
- Parents whose children are 18 years old or older report mental health support (26 per cent) as most valued for the wellbeing of their children, followed by flexible work (23 per cent)



Most valued for the wellbeing of children under 18 years of age.



Most valued for the wellbeing of children 18 years of age and older.



# Remote work

New Zealanders were asked whether they can work flexibly.

- Nearly one-third (29 per cent) cannot work flexibly, and the mental health score of this group (61.9) is equal to the national average (61.9)
- One-third (33 per cent) can work flexibly most or all the time, and this group has the highest mental health score (63.9), two points above the national average (61.9)
- Parents are 35 per cent more likely than non-parents to report they can work flexibly some of the time



## I am able to work flexibly.



## MHI score by “I am able to work flexibly.”

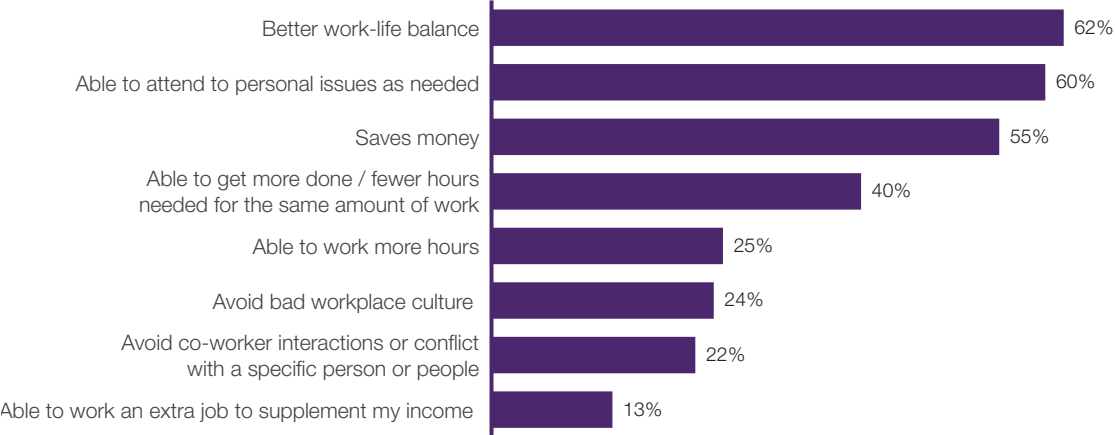


New Zealanders were asked about the advantages they have experienced from remote work.

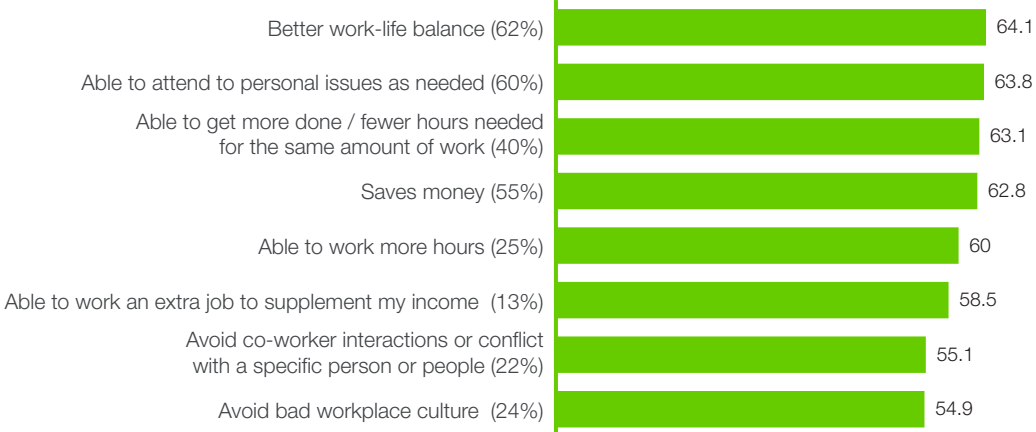
- More than three in five (62 per cent) report that working remotely provides better work-life balance, 60 per cent report being able to attend to personal issues when needed, and 55 per cent report that it saves money
- The lowest mental health score (54.9) is among 24 per cent of respondents reporting avoiding bad workplace culture as an advantage to remote work
- Individuals under 40 years of age are 80 per cent more likely than individuals over 50 years of age to report working more hours as an advantage of remote work
- Non-managers are 70 per cent more likely than managers to report being able to avoid a bad workplace culture as an advantage of remote work
- Respondents under 40 years of age are 60 per cent more likely than individuals over 50 years of age to report working an extra job to supplement their income as an advantage of working remotely



Advantages experienced from remote work.



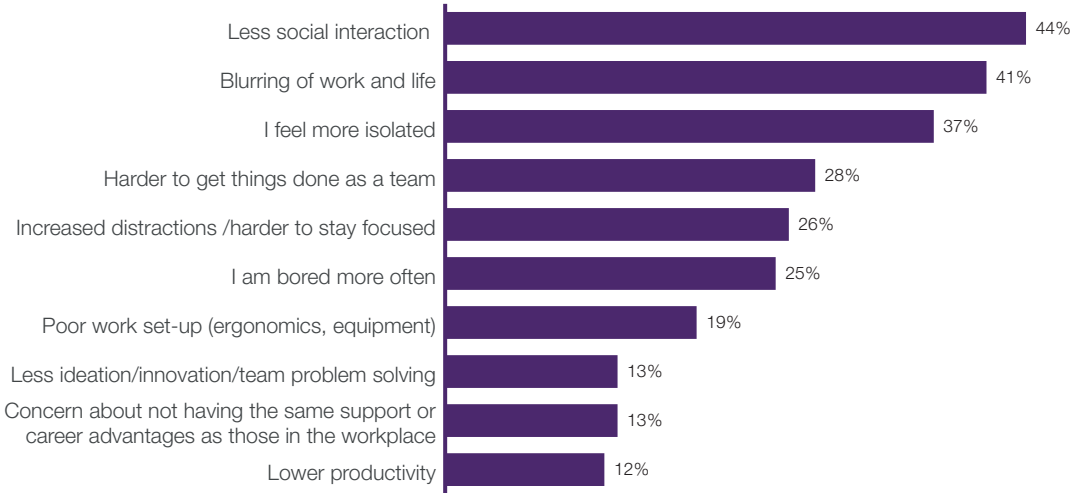
MHI score by “Advantages experienced from remote work.”



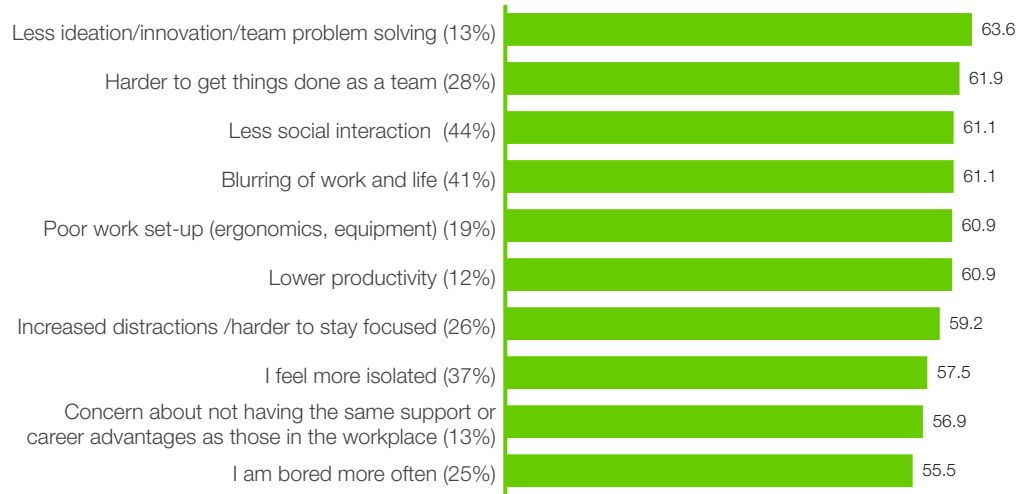
New Zealanders were asked about the disadvantages they have experienced from remote work.

- More than two in five (44 per cent) report having less social interaction as a disadvantage of remote work, 41 per cent report blurring of work and life, and 37 per cent report feeling more isolated
- The lowest mental health score (55.5) is among 25 per cent of individuals concerned about being bored more often
- Parents are 80 per cent more likely than non-parents to be concerned about not having the same support or career advantages as those in the workplace
- Respondents under 40 years of age are more than twice as likely as individuals over 50 years of age to be concerned about not having the same support or career advantages as those in the workplace
- Respondents under 40 years of age are nearly 90 per cent more likely than individuals over 50 years of age to be report feeling more isolated

Disadvantages experienced from remote work.



MHI score by “Disadvantages experienced from remote work.”



# 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 New Zealand 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 New Zealand. Respondents are asked to consider the prior two weeks when answering each question. Data for the current report was collected between January 17 and January 24, 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](mailto:MHI@lifeworks.com)







[www.telushealth.com](http://www.telushealth.com)

