

# The Mental Health Index by LifeWorks™

Canada | January 2022



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# The top 5 things your need to know for January 2022

## 1. After four months of stability, the mental health of Canadians fell 1.1 points in January, the largest single month decline since October 2020.

- The current score is -11.2, a level not seen in eight months, representing a score near the lowest points during the pandemic.
- All mental health sub-scores declined from December 2021 to January 2022.
- The general psychological health of Canadians is currently at the lowest point in the last 22 months.
- The strongest sub-score continues to be financial risk, representing an improvement in the level of emergency savings compared to the pre-2020 benchmark.
- Mental health scores dropped sharply in Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Alberta compared to December 2021.

## 2. More than half of working Canadians say that flexible work is more important than career progression.

- 33% say that flexibility is the most important action that their employer has taken to support mental health.
- 20% say that making them feel more valued is most important.
- 17% say that empathy is most important to supporting mental health.

## 3. Recognition, peer relationships, and salary are the top drivers of belonging at work.

- 16% say that recognition or appreciation is the most important aspect of feeling a sense of belonging at work.
- 14% say that co-worker relationships are the most important.
- Employees who report that workplace relationships is the most important aspect of feeling a sense of belonging at work have higher mental health, work productivity, isolation, and financial risk scores than national averages.

## 4. Nearly half of Canadians say that liking the work they do is the reason they stay with their employer.

- 34% say that the benefits and services offered for their health and wellbeing is the reason they stay.
- 33% say that being well-paid is the reason for staying.
- 21% say that they feel valued, and this group has among the most favourable mental health scores (-4.7).

## 5. Nearly one-in-five Canadians working at the jobsite say their biggest challenge is dealing with difficult people.

- 18% of Canadians that work from home feel lonely compared to 7% that work at the jobsite.
- 13% that work from home feel forgotten most of the time compared to 8% that work at the jobsite.
- A nearly equal proportion of Canadians believe that career opportunities would be limited (36%) as those who disagree (38%) about the career impact of working from home.

55%

say flexible work is more important than career progression

34%

stay because of the benefits offered for their health and wellbeing

19%

say dealing with difficult people is the biggest challenge at the worksite

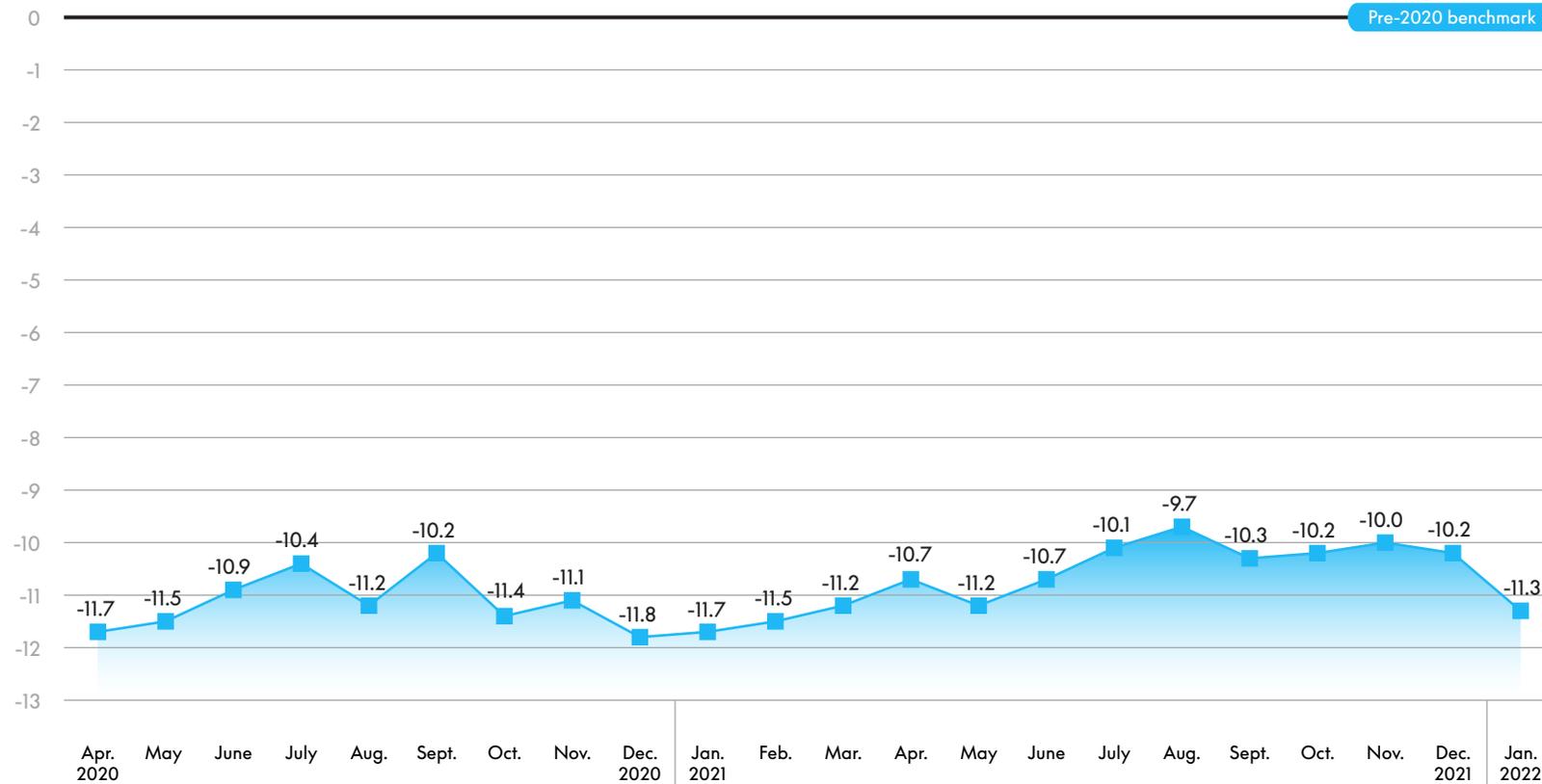
The top driver

of belonging at work is recognition

# The Mental Health Index™

The Mental Health Index™ (MHI) is a measure of deviation from the benchmark<sup>1</sup> of mental health and risk.

The overall Mental Health Index for January 2022 is -11.3 points. An 11-point decrease from the pre-2020 benchmark reflects a population whose mental health is similar to the most distressed four per cent of the benchmark population.



MHI Current Month  
January 2022

-11.3

December 2021

-10.2

<sup>1</sup> The benchmark reflects data collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

## Mental Health Index™ sub-scores

The lowest Mental Health Index™ sub-score is for the risk measure of depression (-12.9), followed by optimism (-12.3), anxiety (-12.2), work productivity (-12.0), isolation (-11.6), and general psychological health (-4.5).

The best sub-score, and the only measure above the historical benchmark continues to be financial risk (3.7).

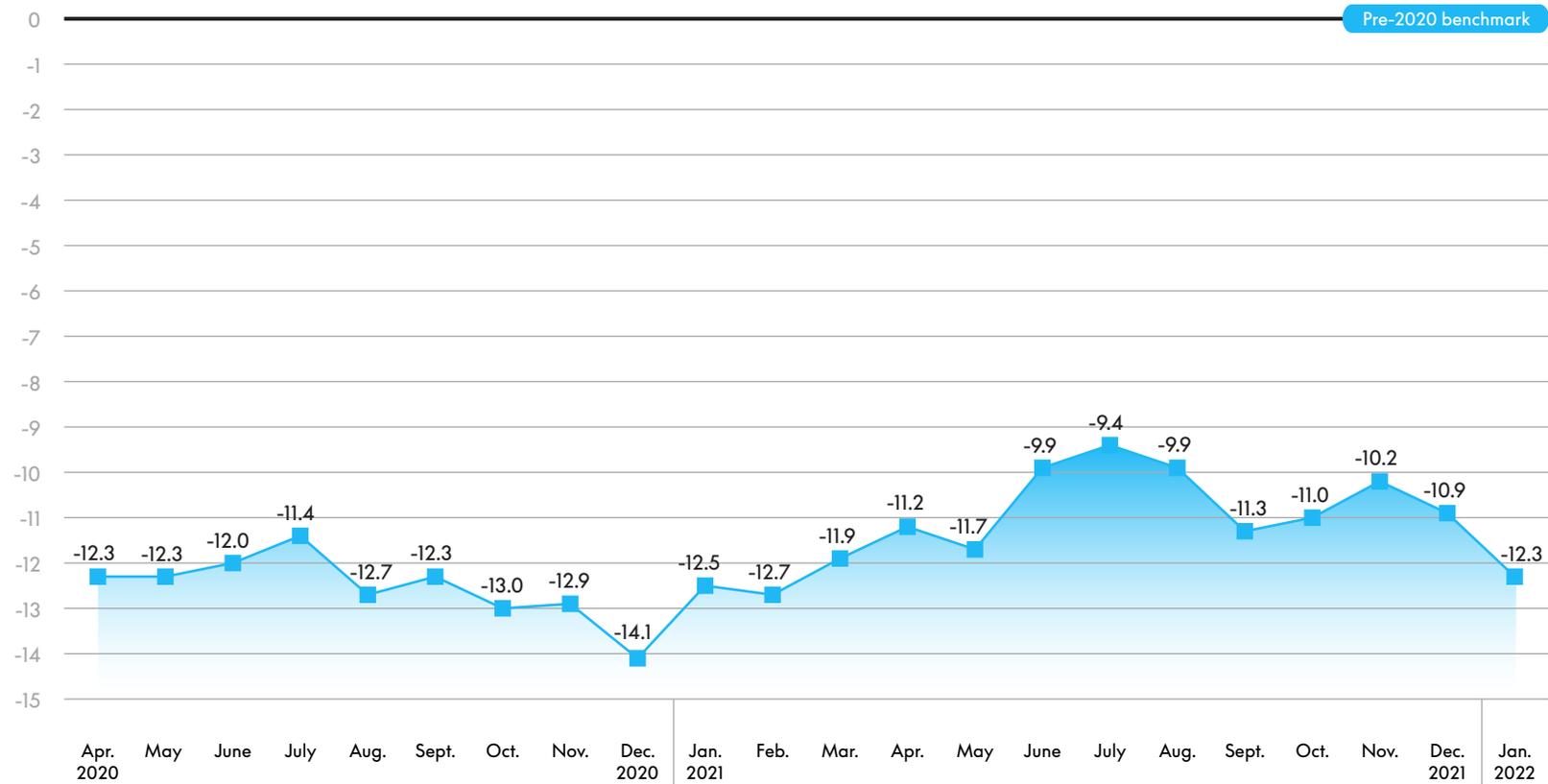
- All mental health sub-scores have declined compared to December 2021.
- The anxiety sub-score has the most significant decline (-1.7 points) in January.
- The financial risk sub-score fell modestly from the prior month and continues to be the strongest of all sub-scores, at nearly four points above the pre-2020 benchmark.

Mental Health Index™ Sub-scores <sup>2</sup>	January 2022	December 2021
Depression	-12.9	-11.8
Optimism	-12.3	-10.9
Anxiety	-12.2	-10.5
Work productivity	-12.0	-10.5
Isolation	-11.6	-10.8
Psychological health	-4.5	-3.5
Financial risk	3.7	3.9

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

## Optimism

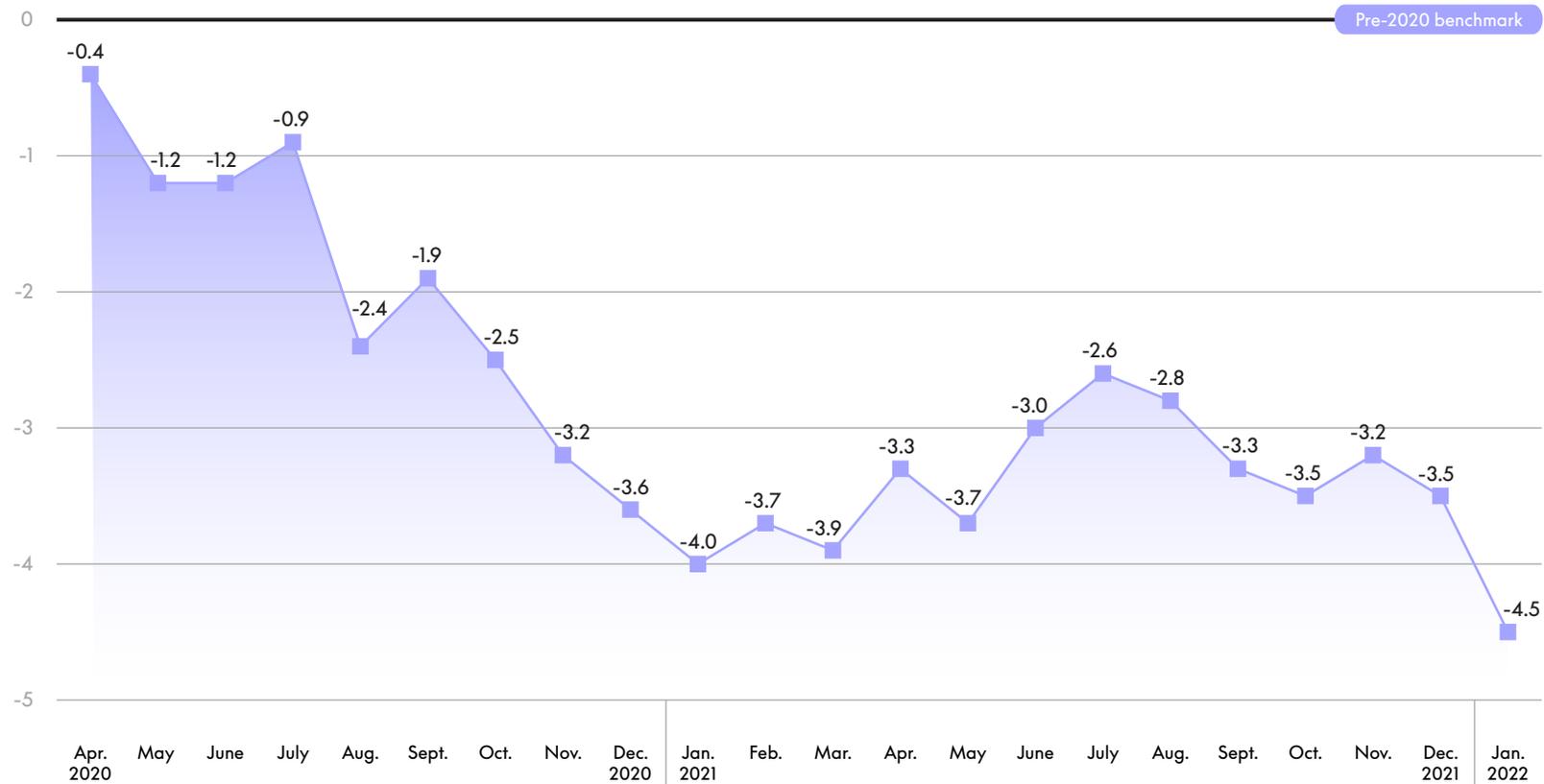
Since April 2020, optimism sub-scores have remained significantly below the benchmark. Despite some months of modest improvement, including a peak in July 2020, there was a general decline to a low point in December 2020 (-14.1). Since December, the optimism sub-score has improved, reaching a high of -9.4 in July 2021. Following two months of declines in August and September, the optimism sub-score improved in November but declined in December and more notably in January to more than 12 points below the pre-2020 benchmark.



## General psychological health

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

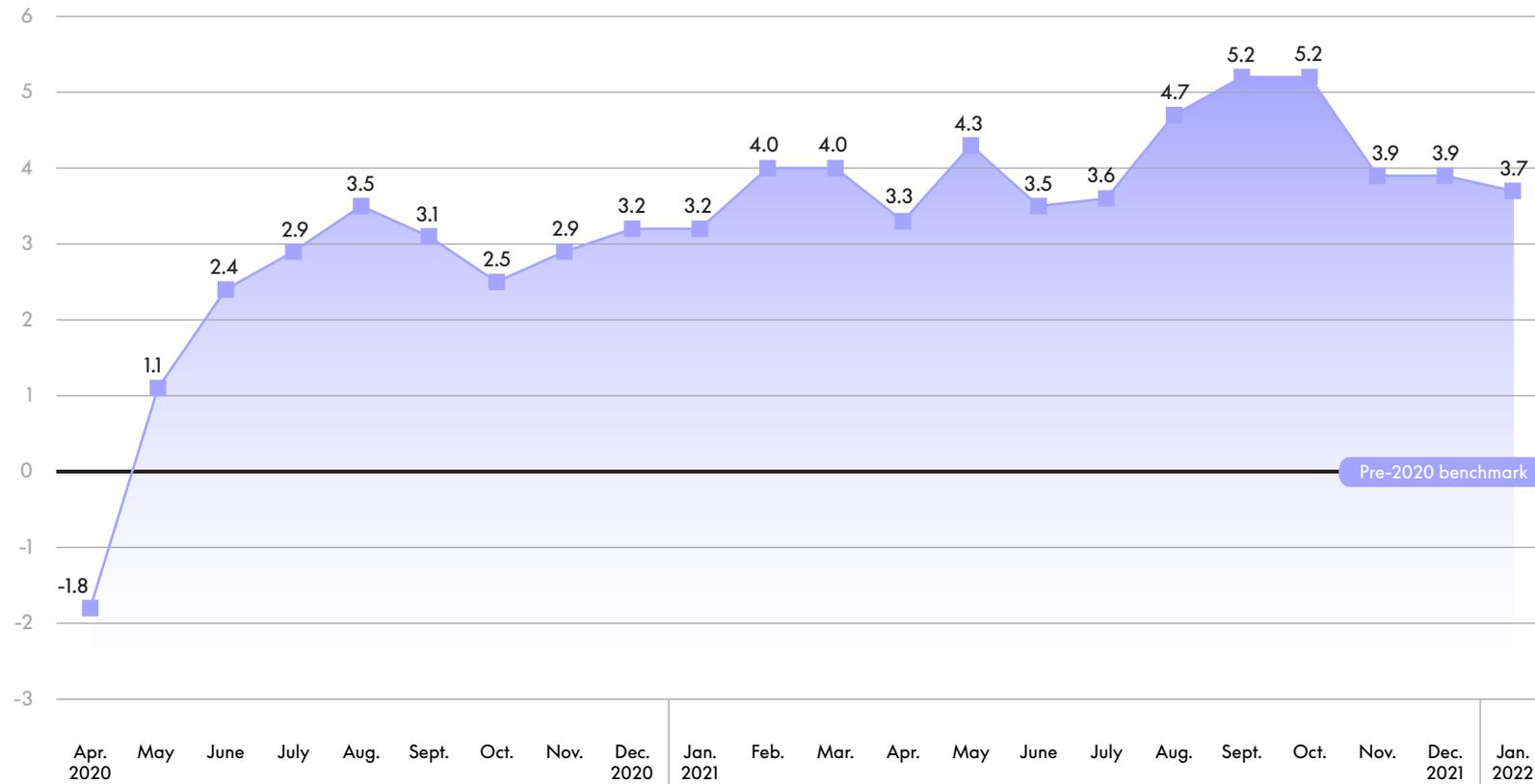
Since January 2021, the psychological health score of Canadians have fluctuated modestly. After three months of decline from August through October 2021, the psychological health score improved slightly in November but declined in December and more significantly, in January 2022 to -4.5 below the pre-2020 benchmark, the lowest score recorded since the launch of the Index in April 2020.



## Financial risk

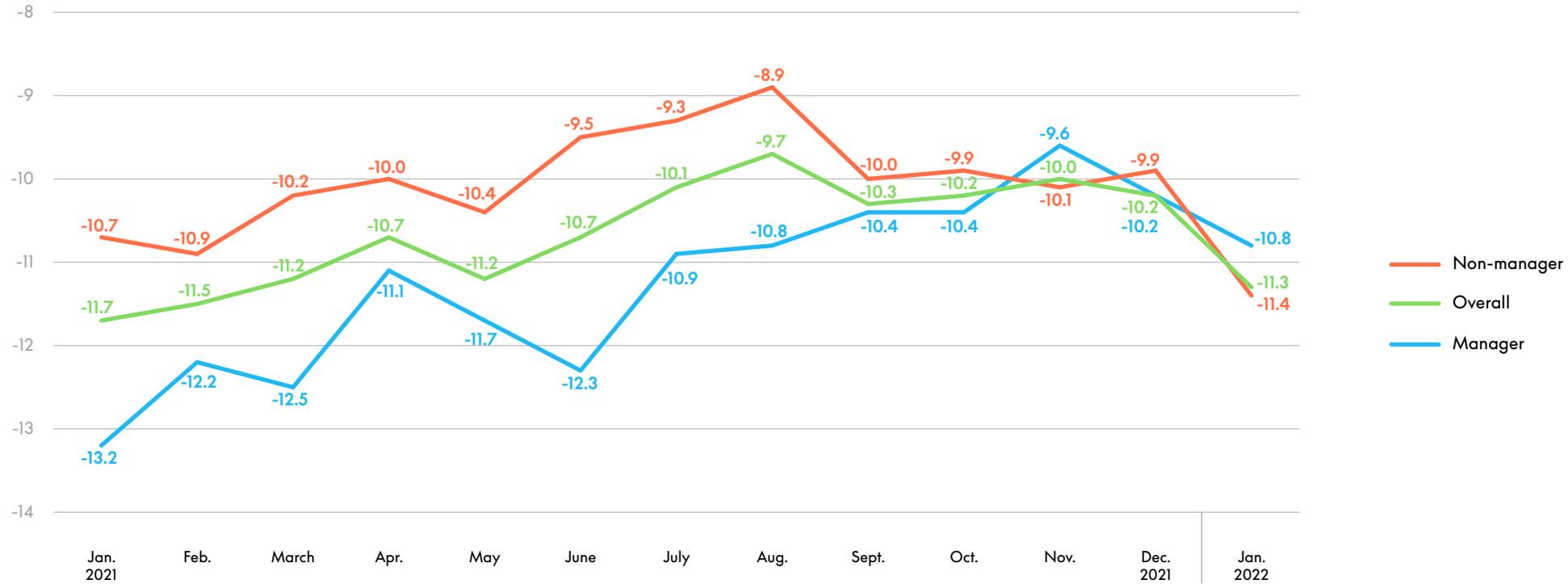
The financial risk sub-score measures the level of individuals' emergency savings.

The financial risk sub-score has shown general improvement since the launch of the MHI in April 2020. In January 2022, the financial risk sub-score of Canadians fell slightly from the prior two months. However, at nearly four points above the pre-2020 benchmark, financial risk continues to be the strongest of all mental health sub-scores.



## 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, this trend reversed with managers reporting a slightly higher average mental health score compared to non-managers. In January 2022, mental health of managers (-10.8) has improved to a score above both non-managers (-11.4) and the national average (-11.3).



## Demographics

- Since the launch of the MHI, women have had significantly lower mental health scores than men. In January 2022, the mental health score of women is -13.0 compared to -9.5 for men.
- In each of the past 22 months, mental health scores improve with age.
- Differences in mental health scores between those with and without children have been reported since the launch of the Index in April 2020. Nearly two years later, this pattern continues with a lower score for those with at least one child (-13.4) compared to those without children (-10.3).

## Employment

- Overall, four per cent of respondents are unemployed<sup>3</sup> and 12 per cent report reduced hours or reduced salary.
- Individuals reporting reduced salary compared to the prior month have the lowest mental health score (-21.6), followed by those reporting fewer hours (-19.7), and those not currently employed (-14.2).
- Managers have a higher mental health score (-10.8) than non-managers (-11.4).
- Individuals who are self-employed have the highest mental health score (-6.8).
- Respondents working for companies with 51-100 employees have the lowest mental health score (-13.3).

## Emergency savings

- Those without emergency savings continue to experience a lower mental health score (-31.9) than the overall group (-11.3). Individuals with emergency savings have a mental health score of -0.9.

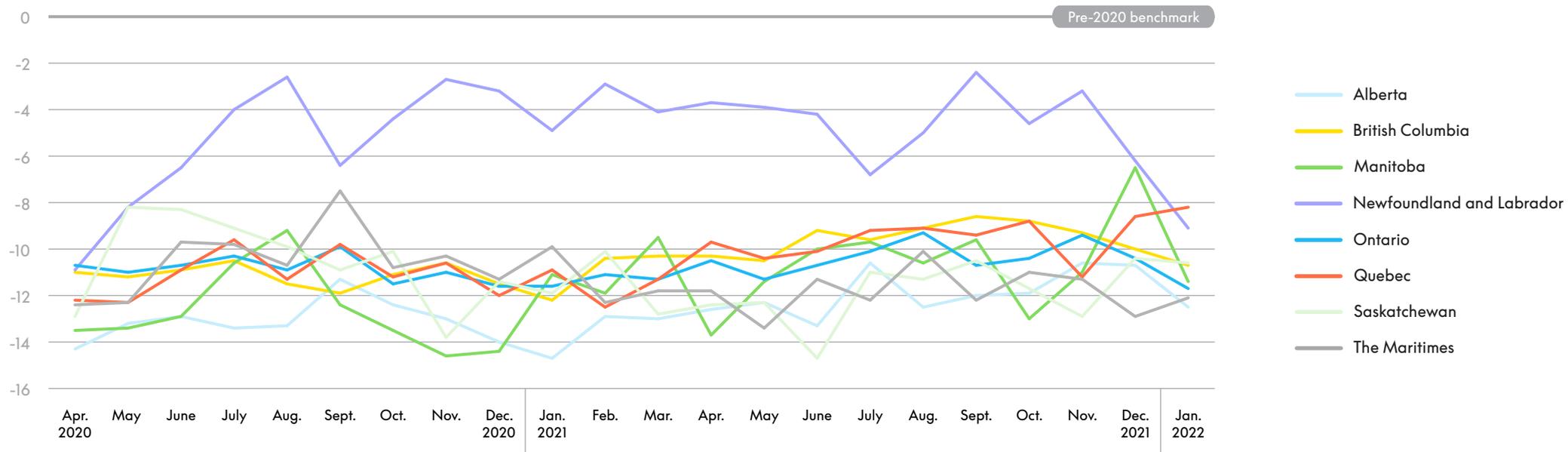
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3 MHI respondents who have been employed in the past six months are included in the poll.

# Mental Health Index™ (provincial)

Since April 2020, provincial mental health scores have fluctuated. Except for Newfoundland and Labrador, the fluctuation patterns for the provinces were similar through July 2021. In January 2022, only Quebec and the Maritimes have improvements in mental health.

- For the first time since May 2020, the mental health score in Newfoundland and Labrador has fallen below that of other provinces. In January 2022, the mental health score in Newfoundland and Labrador is -9.1, a reduction of three points from December 2021.
- The lowest mental health score in January 2022 is in Alberta (-12.5), a nearly 2-point decline from December 2021.
- The mental health score in Quebec is the most favourable this month; however, it remains more than eight points below the pre-2020 benchmark.



Employment status	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	-9.9	-8.5
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	-19.7	-22.1
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	-21.6	-23.9
Not currently employed	-14.2	-15.1
Age group	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
Age 20-29	-22.6	-21.3
Age 30-39	-16.7	-15.6
Age 40-49	-12.7	-11.7
Age 50-59	-8.1	-7.4
Age 60-69	-3.9	-3.6
Number of children	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
No children in household	-10.3	-9.6
1 child	-14.1	-11.6
2 children	-12.5	-11.4
3 children or more	-12.4	-11.3

Province	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
Alberta	-12.5	-10.7
British Columbia	-10.7	-10.0
Manitoba	-11.4	-6.5
Newfoundland and Labrador	-9.1	-6.2
The Maritimes	-12.1	-12.9
Quebec	-8.2	-8.6
Ontario	-11.7	-10.4
Saskatchewan	-10.6	-10.4
Gender	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
Men	-9.5	-8.6
Women	-13.0	-11.8
Household income	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
<\$30K/annum	-20.0	-18.5
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	-15.3	-15.5
\$60K to <\$100K	-11.3	-10.2
\$100K to <\$150K	-9.4	-7.5
\$150K or more	-4.5	-2.4

Employer size	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
Self-employed/sole proprietor	-6.8	-5.2
2-50 employees	-12.4	-10.8
51-100 employees	-13.3	-13.2
101-500 employees	-12.4	-11.9
501-1,000 employees	-11.5	-11.4
1,001-5,000 employees	-10.1	-9.0
5,001-10,000 employees	-10.2	-9.8
More than 10,000 employees	-10.5	-8.8
Manager	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
Manager	-10.8	-10.2
Non-manager	-11.4	-9.9

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

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

**Available upon request:**

Specific cross-correlational and custom analyses

# Mental Health Index™ (industry)

Full-time post-secondary students continue to have the lowest mental health score (-16.9), however, there has been an improvement of nearly nine points since December 2021. Individuals employed in Accommodation and Food Services have the next lowest score (-16.6) in January 2022.

Those employed in the Management of Companies and Enterprises (-4.6), Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction (-7.2), and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (-7.6) have the highest mental health scores this month.

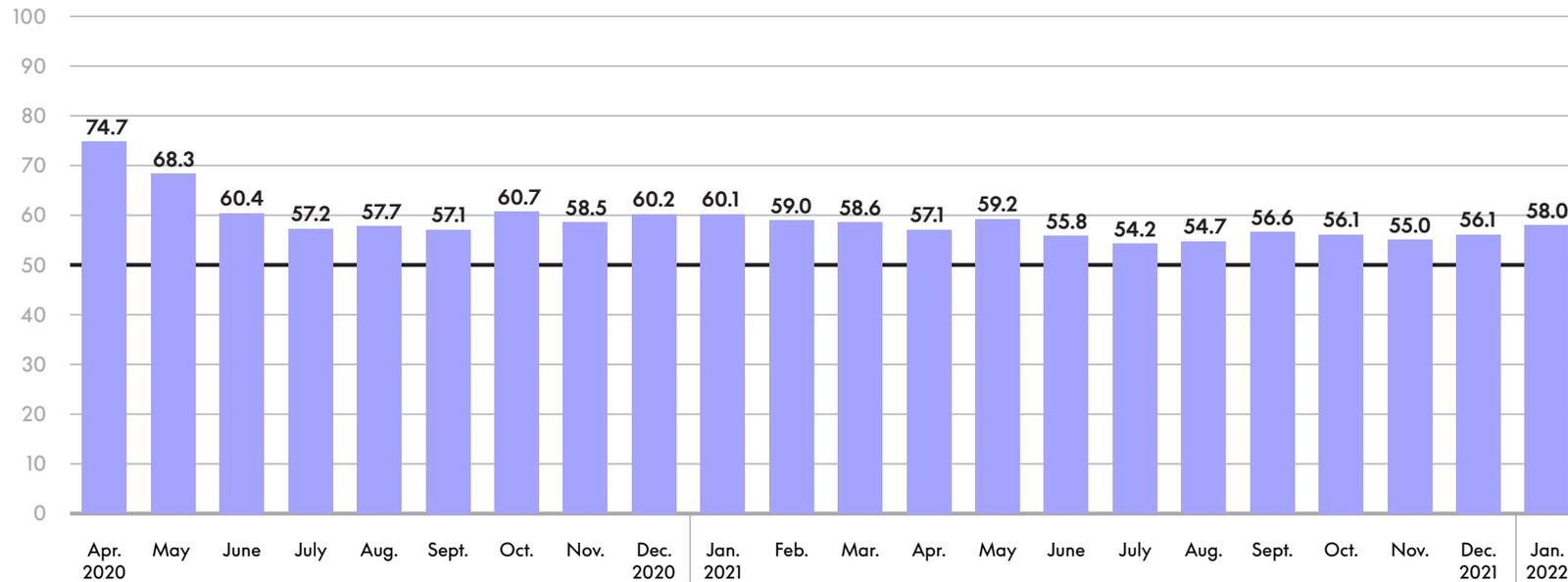
Changes from the prior month are shown in the table.

Industry	January 2022	December 2021	Change
Information and Cultural Industries	-7.8	-16.7	9.0
Full-time student	-16.9	-25.5	8.6
Management of Companies and Enterprises	-4.6	-9.9	5.3
Utilities	-12.1	-13.2	1.2
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	-12.6	-13.3	0.6
Wholesale Trade	-9.8	-10.4	0.5
Finance and Insurance	-10.4	-10.4	0.1
Manufacturing	-10.3	-10.3	0.0
Other	-13.6	-13.1	-0.5
Educational Services	-10.1	-9.4	-0.7
Health Care and Social Assistance	-13.6	-12.6	-1.0
Construction	-10.7	-9.0	-1.6
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	-7.2	-5.4	-1.8
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	-7.6	-5.7	-1.8
Retail Trade	-12.8	-10.9	-1.9
Public Administration	-11.1	-8.8	-2.3
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	-13.0	-10.4	-2.7
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	-10.5	-7.7	-2.7
Transportation and Warehousing	-9.5	-6.7	-2.8
Automotive Industry	-8.1	-5.3	-2.8
Other services (except Public Administration)	-12.0	-8.1	-3.9
Accommodation and Food Services	-16.6	-11.7	-5.0

# The Mental Stress Change score

The Mental Stress Change score (MStressChg) is a measure of the level of reported mental stress compared to the prior month. **The Mental Stress Change score for January 2022 is 58.0.** This reflects a net increase in mental stress compared to the prior month.

The current score indicates that 23 per cent of the population is experiencing more mental stress compared to the prior month, with six per cent experiencing less. A continued increase in mental stress since April 2020 indicates a significant accumulation of strain in the Canadian population.



- ▲ More mental stress
- 50 = No change from prior month
- ▼ Less mental stress

MStressChg  
Current Month—  
January 2022

58.0

MStressChg  
December 2021

56.1

# Mental Stress Change (percentages)

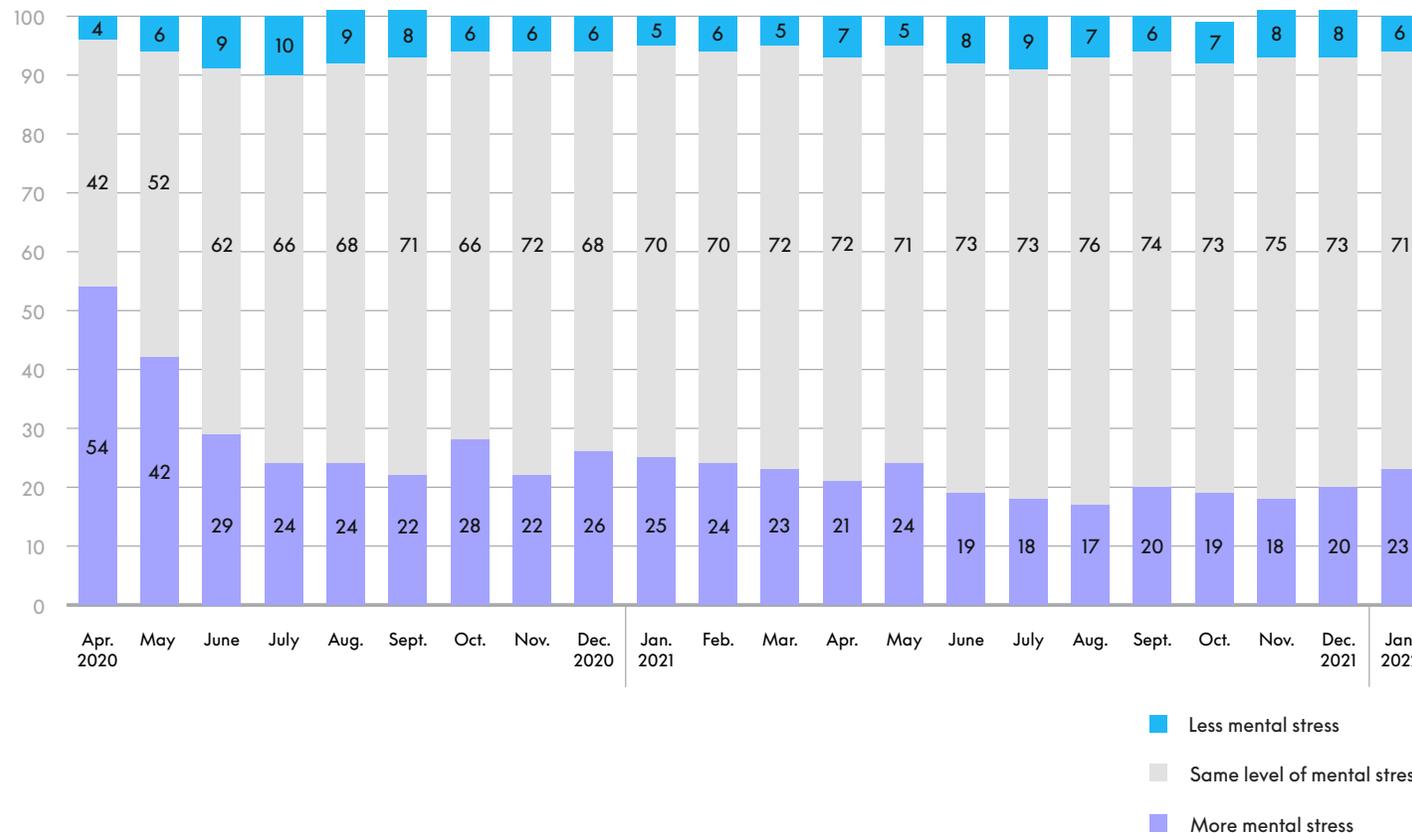
Mental Stress Change tracks stress changes each month.

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

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

In April 2020, 54 per cent of individuals reported an increase in mental stress. The number of respondents reporting increased month-over-month mental stress is 23 per cent in January 2022, while 71 per cent of respondents report the same level of mental stress and six per cent report a decrease in mental stress.

Mental Stress Change by month



## Demographics

- Since the launch of the MHI in April 2020, younger people have experienced a greater increase in mental stress month over month compared to older respondents.
- Since April 2020, women have had larger increases in mental stress compared to men. In January 2022, the mental stress change score for women is 59.1 compared to 56.9 for men.

## Geography

- The greatest increase in month-over-month stress is for respondents living in Newfoundland (59.6), followed by Ontario (58.5), Quebec (58.0), Alberta (57.9), Manitoba (57.9), the Maritimes (57.8), Saskatchewan (57.1), and British Columbia (56.3).

## Employment

- The greatest increase in mental stress is seen in employed people with reduced hours (67.0), followed by employed people with reduced salary (61.3), employed people with no change to salary or hours (57.2), and unemployed people (53.3).
- Managers have a greater increase in mental stress (58.7) than non-managers (57.8).

Employment status	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	57.2	55.1
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	67.0	62.5
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	61.3	71.2
Not currently employed	53.3	55.8

Age group	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
Age 20-29	62.2	62.4
Age 30-39	61.1	59.0
Age 40-49	58.5	55.3
Age 50-59	57.3	54.3
Age 60-69	53.7	54.9

Number of children	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
No children in household	56.7	55.4
1 child	61.3	58.4
2 children	60.5	56.5
3 children or more	60.6	56.1

Province	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
Alberta	57.9	58.1
British Columbia	56.3	54.4
Manitoba	57.9	50.4
Newfoundland and Labrador	59.6	54.5
The Maritimes	57.8	57.5
Quebec	58.0	54.1
Ontario	58.5	56.7
Saskatchewan	57.1	58.3

Gender	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
Men	56.9	55.0
Women	59.1	57.2

Household income	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
<\$30K/annum	58.7	56.6
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	58.8	58.0
\$60K to <\$100K	58.2	55.3
\$100K to <\$150K	57.9	57.1
\$150K or more	57.5	53.5

Employer size	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
Self-employed/sole proprietor	56.5	52.9
2-50 employees	58.4	55.7
51-100 employees	56.5	53.3
101-500 employees	56.9	56.7
501-1,000 employees	59.6	58.5
1,001-5,000 employees	58.1	57.5
5,001-10,000 employees	61.8	59.3
More than 10,000 employees	57.0	55.9

Manager	Jan. 2022	Dec. 2021
Manager	58.7	57.1
Non-manager	57.8	55.5

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

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

**Available upon request:**

Specific cross-correlational and custom analyses

# The Mental Stress Change (industry)

In January 2022, individuals employed in Construction (54.0), Information and Cultural Industries (54.2), and Real Estate, Rental and Leasing (54.6) have the lowest increase in mental stress.

Individuals working in Accommodation and Food Services have the most significant increase in mental stress (64.6), followed by individuals employed in Wholesale Trade (63.5), and full-time post-secondary students (62.0).

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

Industry	January 2022	December 2021
Construction	54.0	50.4
Information and Cultural Industries	54.2	65.1
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	54.6	52.5
Manufacturing	55.1	55.6
Utilities	55.3	57.7
Other	55.6	55.4
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	55.7	59.4
Transportation and Warehousing	55.8	55.5
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	56.3	53.6
Management of Companies and Enterprises	56.8	63.0
Public Administration	57.4	55.2
Finance and Insurance	57.6	56.8
Retail Trade	58.1	56.9
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	58.3	48.6
Automotive Industry	59.3	52.4
Educational Services	59.7	56.4
Other services (except Public Administration)	59.7	52.7
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	61.0	58.2
Health Care and Social Assistance	61.7	60.6
Full-time student	62.0	58.3
Wholesale Trade	63.5	56.3
Accommodation and Food Services	64.6	54.1

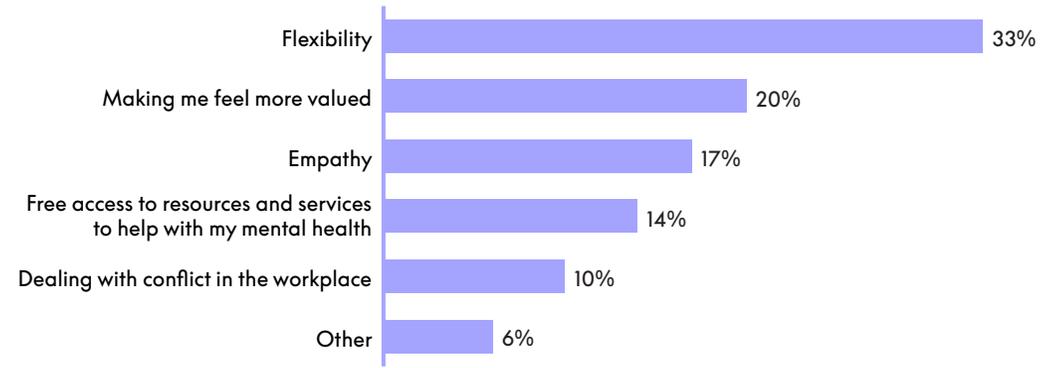
# Spotlight

## Mental health support

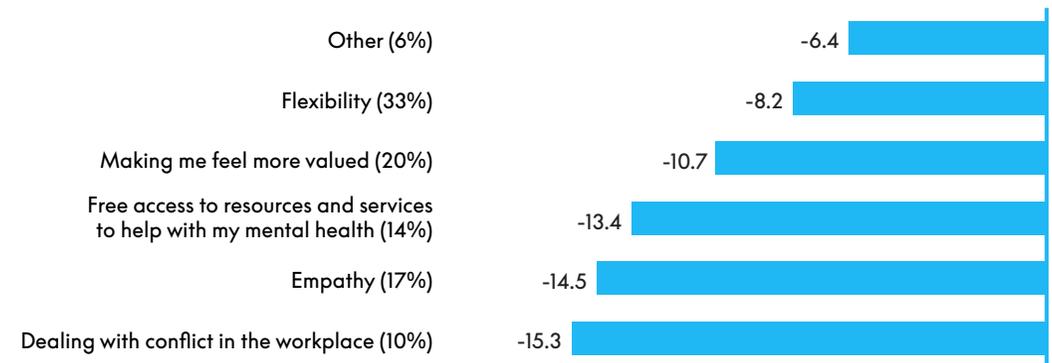
Canadians were asked which action taken by their employer is most important in supporting their mental health.

- One-third (33 per cent) of Canadians report that flexibility is the most important action taken by their employer in supporting their mental health. This group has a mental health score (-8.2) three points higher than the national average (-11.3).
- One-in-five indicate that making them feel more valued is the most important action taken by their employer, followed by 17 per cent reporting empathy.
- The lowest mental health score (-15.3) is observed in 10 per cent of Canadians who report dealing with conflict in the workplace is the most important action taken by their employer in supporting mental health.

### Most important action taken by my employer in supporting mental health



### MHI score by the most important action taken by my employer in supporting mental health

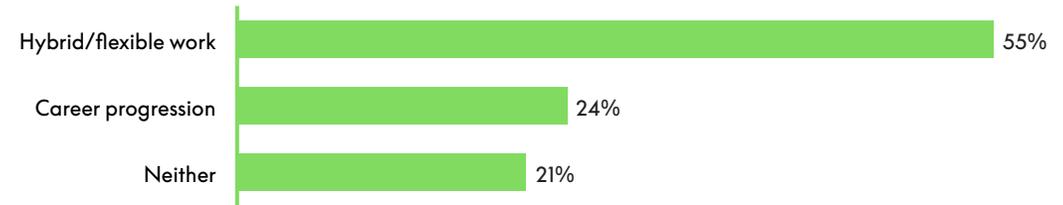


## Importance of flexible/hybrid work or career progression

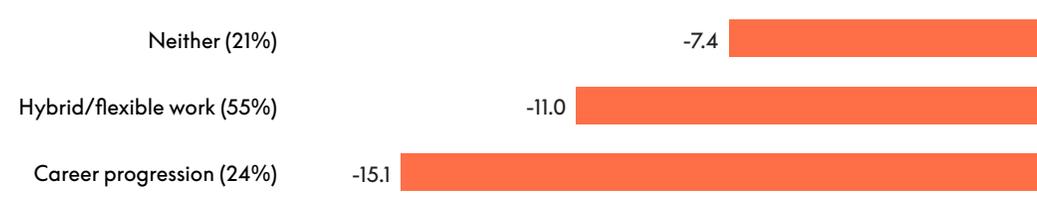
Canadians were asked which is more important, flexible/hybrid work or career progression.

- More than half (55 per cent) of Canadians report that flexible/hybrid work is more important than career progression.
- Managers are 80 per cent more likely than non-managers to indicate that career progression is more important than flexible/hybrid work.
- Parents are 50 per cent more likely than non-parents to indicate that career progression is more important than flexible/hybrid work.

### Which is most important to you?



### MHI score by which is most important to you

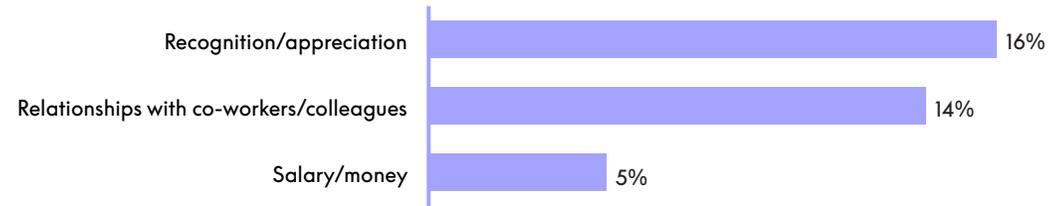


# Belonging

Canadians were asked what is most important for them to feel a sense of belonging at work.

- Canadians most commonly reported recognition or appreciation, relationships with co-workers or colleagues, and salary/money as most important to feel a sense of belonging at work.
- Respondents reporting relationships with co-workers or colleagues as most important have higher mental health, work productivity, isolation, and financial risk scores than national averages.
- Those reporting recognition or appreciation as most important have lower mental health and isolation scores than national averages.
- Those reporting salary or money as most important have lower mental health, work productivity, isolation, and financial risk scores than national averages. In particular, the financial risk score of this group is below benchmark while the overall Canadian average is above the pre-2020 benchmark.

## What is most important to feel a sense of belonging at work?

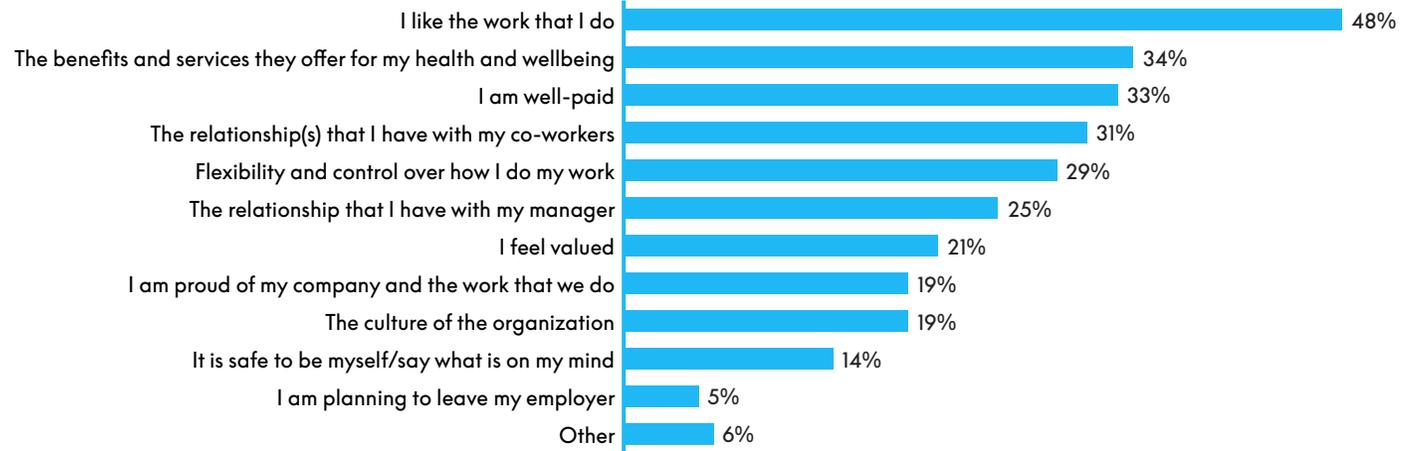


# Reasons for remaining with an employer

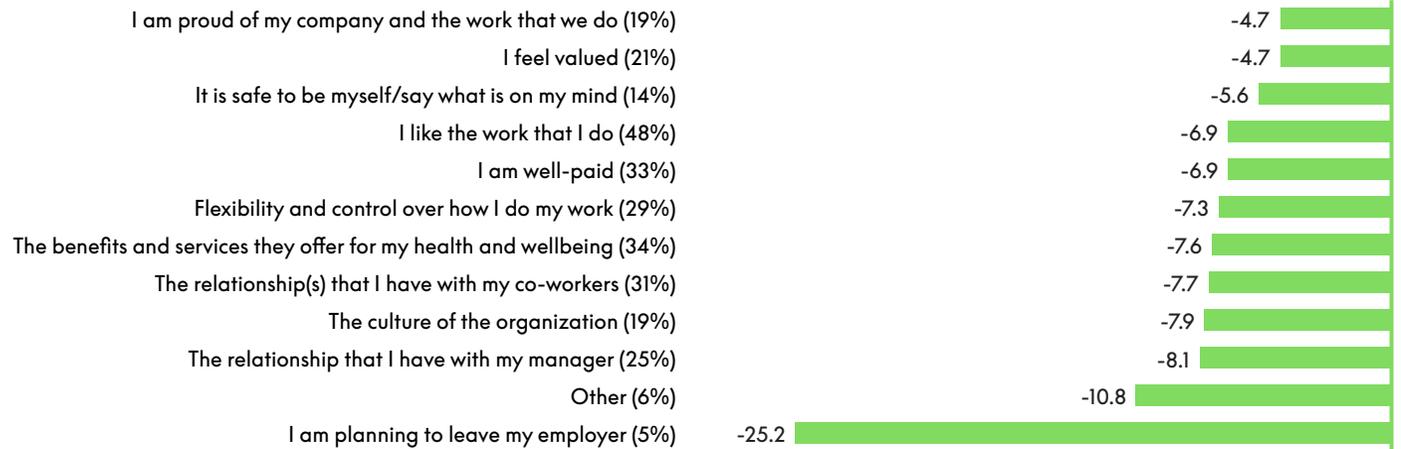
Canadians were asked for the reasons they stay with their employer.

- Nearly half (48 per cent) of Canadians report that liking the work they do is the reason they stay with their employer.
- More than one-third (34 per cent) indicate that the benefits and services offered for their health and wellbeing is the reason they stay, and one-third (33 per cent) report that being well-paid is the reason for staying with their employer.
- More than one-in-five (21 per cent) report that they feel valued, and this group has the most favourable mental health score (-4.7).
- Five per cent of Canadians are planning to leave their employer and this group has a mental health score (-25.2) more than twelve points below the national average.
- Managers are 40 per cent more likely than non-managers to report that feeling valued is the primary reason for staying with their employer.

## Reasons for staying with my employer



## MHI score by reasons for staying with my employer

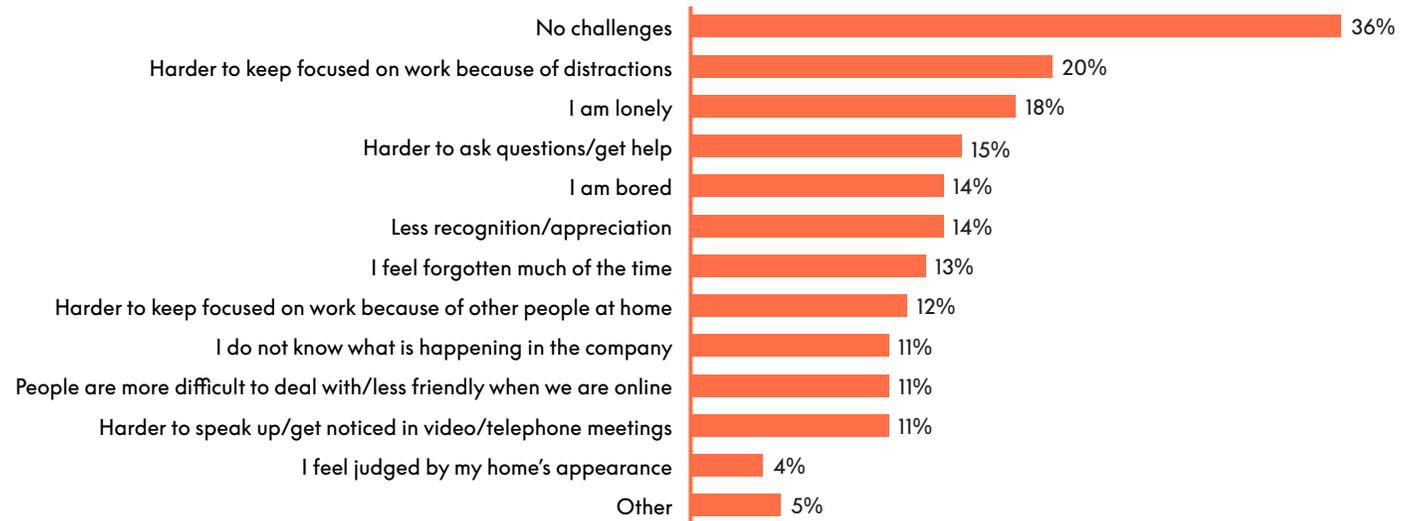


# Work from home

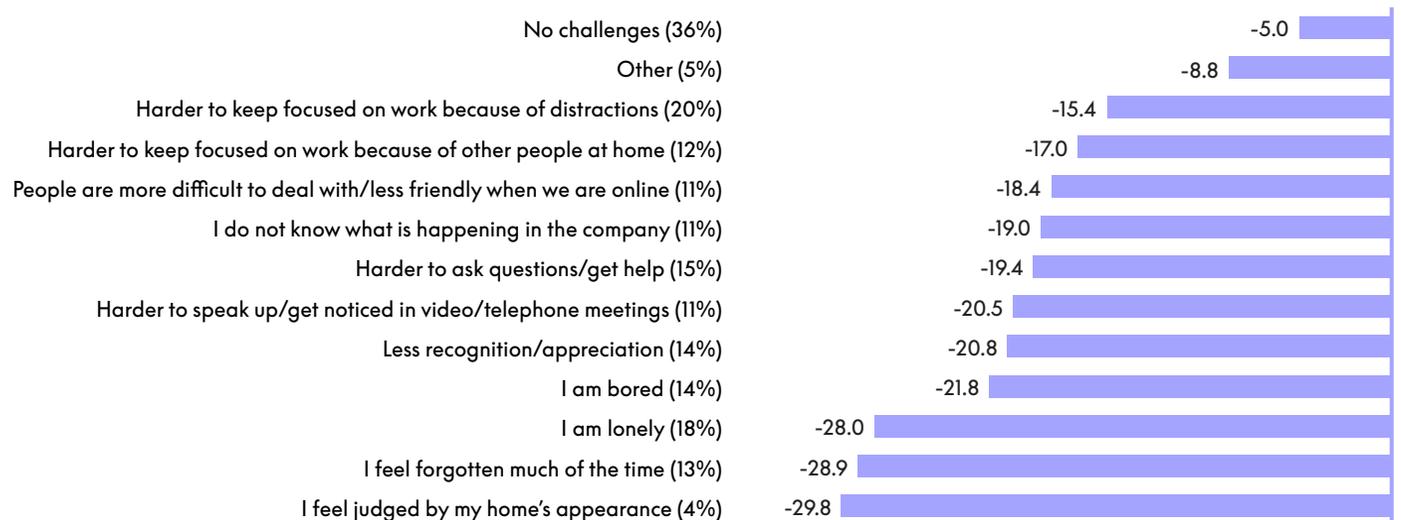
Nearly three-in-five (57 per cent) of Canadians who report working from home were asked about the greatest challenge in this environment.

- More than one-third (36 per cent) do not have challenges working from home. This group has the most favourable mental health score (-5.0), six points higher than the national average (-11.3).
- Eighteen per cent of Canadians working from home feel lonely and 13 per cent feel forgotten most of the time. Both groups have mental health scores more than 16 points below the national average.
- Managers are 60 per cent more likely than non-managers to indicate that less recognition/appreciation is the greatest challenge of working from home.

## Greatest challenge working from home



## MHI score by greatest challenge working from home

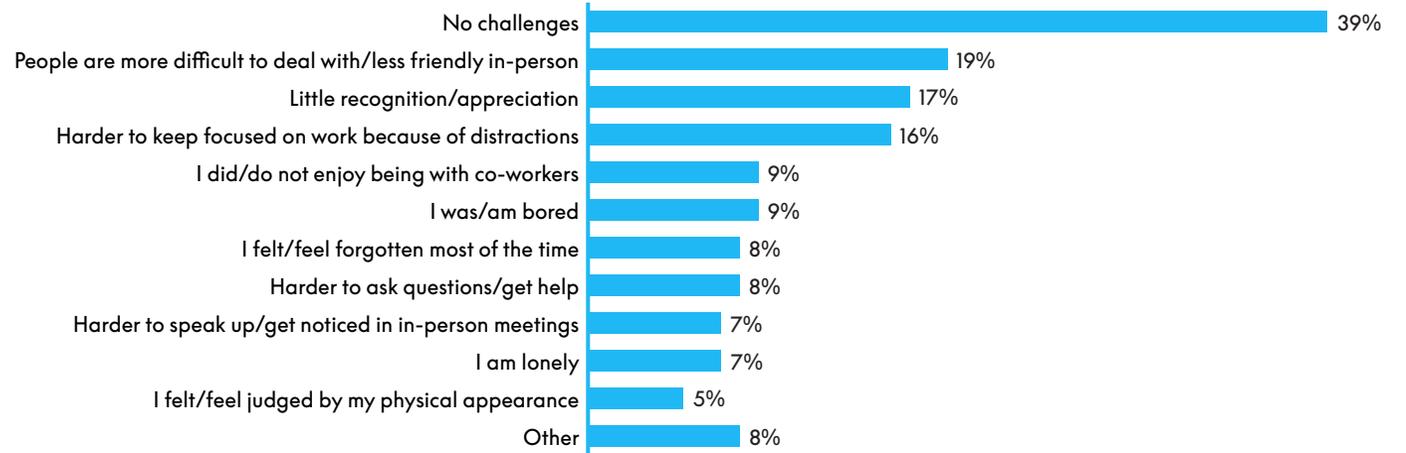


## Work at jobsite

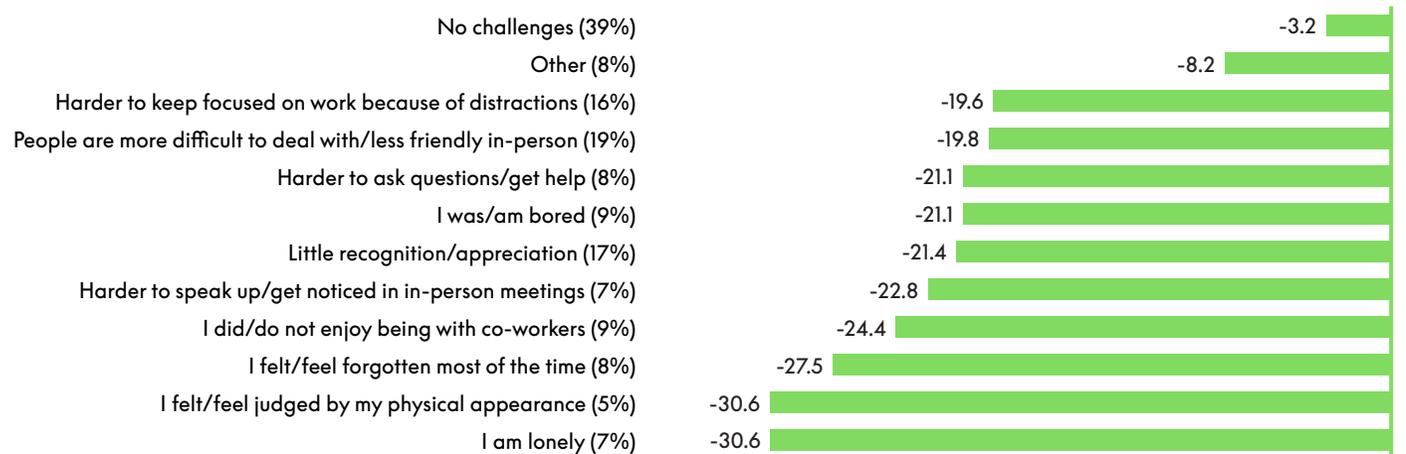
Canadians working at the jobsite were asked about the greatest challenge in this environment.

- Nearly two-in-five (39 per cent) Canadians do not have challenges working at the jobsite. This group has the most favourable mental health score (-3.2), eight points higher than the national average (-11.3).
- Nearly one-in-five (19 per cent) indicate that the greatest challenge is that people are more difficult to deal with or less friendly in-person.
- Despite being at the jobsite, 15 per cent of Canadians say that they are lonely or feel forgotten much of the time. This group has a mental health score more than 15 points below the national average.
- Respondents over 60 are 70 per cent more likely than those under 60 to report not having challenges at the jobsite.

### Greatest challenge working at jobsite



### MHI score by greatest challenge working at jobsite



## Career impact of work from home

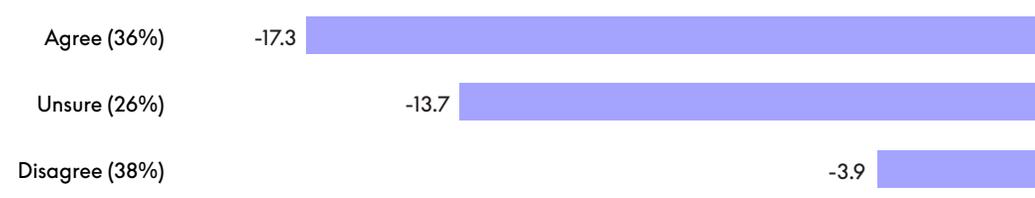
Canadians were asked whether they would be concerned that career opportunities would be limited if they were to work from home full or part-time.

- More than one-third (36 per cent) of Canadians believe their career opportunities would be limited if they were to work from home. The mental health score of this group (-17.3), is six points lower than the national average (-11.3).
- Nearly two-in-five (38 per cent) do not believe their career opportunities would be limited, and this group has the most favourable mental health score (-3.9).
- Canadians under the age of 40 are 75 per cent more likely than those 50 and older to believe their career opportunities would be limited if they were to work from home.

### Are you concerned about career opportunities if working from home?



### MHI score by concern about career opportunities if working from home



# Overview of the Mental Health Index by LifeWorks™

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

## The Mental Health Index™ report has three parts:

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

## Methodology

Data for this report is collected through an online survey of 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. The same respondents take part

each month to remove a sampling bias. Respondents are asked to consider the prior two weeks when answering each question. The Mental Health Index™ has been published monthly since April 2020. Benchmark data was collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Data for the current report was collected between January 13 and 26, 2022.

## Calculations

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

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

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

## Additional data and analyses

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

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