

# The Mental Health Index™ report

The United States, June 2020

Spotlight on the mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic



**LifeWorks**  
by Morneau Shepell





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## Executive summary

As June got underway, the majority of U.S. states were easing into partial and/or regional reopening following close to three months of pandemic lockdown. Both New York and New Jersey, hardest hit by COVID-19, have followed a more gradual approach to phased reopening beginning this month. The U.S. Congressional Budget Office however estimates the cumulative loss arising from COVID-19 to the U.S. economy of up to \$16 trillion by 2030.<sup>1</sup> Despite the unprecedented economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including record levels of unemployment, the U.S. labor market has started to show some early signs of recovery. The Canada-United States border continues to remain closed to non-essential travel.

The U.S. continues to report the highest number of COVID-19 cases globally. A spike in COVID-19 hospitalizations in some states is believed to be due, in part, to reopening the economy in some areas, a lapse in social distancing practices and improper mask use. For the third consecutive month, the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic economically and societally are continuing to have an impact on the mental health of Americans.

In the first half of June, unprecedented awareness of anti-Black racism emerged. Outrage and protests against racism and calls to stem police violence were sparked by the high-profile death of a Black American, George Floyd, during arrest in Minneapolis, Minnesota. “Black Lives Matter” protests in U.S. cities and around the world, have dramatically shifted the attention of Americans to awareness of anti-Black racism. As Americans took to the streets, many wearing masks, combined with early reopening in some states, concerns have increased about a potential spike in the number of COVID-19 cases in the weeks ahead.

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<sup>1</sup> Teneo Coronavirus Morning Briefing, June 2, 2020.



## Mental Health Index™

The overall Mental Health Index™ for June 2020 is **-6 points**, unchanged from the prior month. This index represents the deviation from the pre-2020 benchmark. A negative score indicates poorer mental health relative to the benchmark, and a positive score indicates better mental health. The benchmark reflects mental health data from 2017, 2018 and 2019. A 6-point decrease from the pre COVID-19 benchmark<sup>2</sup> reflects a population whose mental health is similar to the twenty-sixth percentile of the benchmark. June is the third consecutive month of a low Mental Health Index™.

The lowest Mental Health Index™ sub-score is for the risk measure of optimism (-7.9 points), followed by anxiety (-7.7), work productivity (-6.9), depression (-6.8), and isolation (-5.9).

- There are modest improvements in all but two sub-scores in June; general psychological health remains the same as the prior month and isolation has worsened slightly.
- A decline in the overall Mental Health Index™ is observed only for individuals whose employment hours had been reduced, those recently unemployed and households with one child.
- Overall, the financial score continues to improve with a score of 8.6 points; an improvement month-over-month since April. This score indicates increased saving behavior month-over-month since April, 2020 and more saving than prior to 2020. That said, individuals without emergency savings experience a lower score in mental health (-20.7) than the overall group (-6). As well, people with no emergency fund have uniformly low scores on the Mental Health Index™.

Ten percent of survey respondents are unemployed. Of those who participated in the Mental Health Index™ in all three months and were employed in April 2020, 38 percent had some change in employment (reduced hours, reduced salary, or job loss) between April and June 2020.

- Of those who encountered a change in employment, 26 percent are back to a full employment.

The overall Mental Health Index™ for June 2020 is **-6 points**, unchanged from the prior month

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<sup>2</sup> The raw score for the Mental Health Index™ benchmark is 75/100. The June 2020 score is 69/100.



- Of those that saw a reduction in hours or salary, 64 percent are still working under those conditions, and 6 percent of those individuals ultimately lost their jobs.
- Individuals reporting reduced salary from last month have lower Mental Health Index™ scores than those with a reduction in hours and individuals not employed.
- Regardless of employment status, there continues to be a lower mental health score for females (-7.8) when compared to males (-3.3). Further, the younger the age group, the lower the Mental Health Index™ score.

The highest mental health scores this month are observed in those employed in Finance and Insurance (-2.8), Public Administration (-3.7), Transportation and Warehousing (-3.8), and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (-3.8).

- Full-time students had the lowest mental health score (-21.9) by a large margin, followed by Management of Companies and Enterprises (-15.6), and Information and Cultural Industries (-14.5).
- Individuals in Health Care and Social Services show improvement yet again this month (-5.3) despite the ongoing strain and risk associated with professions in this sector.

For the third consecutive month, the two key drivers of the Mental Health Index™ are financial risk and isolation.

## Mental Stress Change

**The Mental Stress Change score for June 2020 is 58.4.** This indicates that more than one-quarter of the population is experiencing more mental stress when compared to the prior month, with a small proportion experiencing less. This is the third month in a row where the Mental Stress Change score reflects increased mental stress in the population overall. Considering geography, the greatest increase in stress month-over-month was for respondents living in the Northeast (60.5), followed by the West (58.2), the South (57.9), and the Midwest (57.4).

- The greatest increase in mental stress is seen in employed people with reduced salary (67.5), followed closely by employed people with reduced hours (66.3) when compared to employed people with no change to salary or hours (58.3) and unemployed people (59.7).

For three consecutive months, every industry has reported an increase in mental stress

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- As was reported in prior months, and as evidenced again in the current month, younger respondents are experiencing a greater increase in mental stress when compared to older respondents.
- Further, over the three month survey period, females have larger increases in mental stress when compared with males.

Mental Stress Change scores for the Automotive, Mining, Oil and Gas Extraction, and Utilities industries are less steep when compared to the prior month.

- Full-time students have the steepest increase in Mental Stress Change score followed by individuals employed in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (67.1), and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (65.6).
- Every industry has reported an increase in mental stress in each of three consecutive months.

## Additional findings

### Mental health impact and Employer support

After months of social distancing, job losses and the threat of contracting COVID-19, emotions are high.

- The most commonly reported emotion is calm (21 percent), followed by worry (18 percent), and frustration (18 percent).
- Individuals feeling more positive emotions (i.e. calm, happiness, hopefulness, or gratitude) have much higher Mental Health Index™ scores than individuals feeling more negative emotions (i.e. anger, disbelief, frustration, helplessness, and worry).
- A deeper examination of the data shows that the profiles (e.g. age, gender, household income) of individuals choosing positive emotions are not remarkably different from individuals reporting negative emotions. This suggests that an individual's personal outlook contributes significantly to how well that individual is coping with the strain of the pandemic, and this effect is reflected in the Mental Health Index™ scores.



In following the trend of individuals from April 2020 to June 2020, individuals who report more positive emotions have significantly higher Mental Health Index™ scores and are generally improving in their mental health scores.

- Individuals experiencing more negative emotions are not demonstrating an improving mental health trend and have significantly lower scores.
- As well, individuals feeling positive emotions are experiencing a lower curve of mental stress and are also more likely to feel less mental stress when compared to the previous month. Individuals who are mainly experiencing negative emotions are more likely to continue to feel more mental stress than the previous month.
- While increases in mental stress continue, the steepness of the increase is flatter for those reporting all emotional states with the exception of individuals feeling anger as the primary emotion. These individuals have a spike in feeling more mental stress in June 2020 over May 2020.

There is a strong correlation between scores on the Mental Health Index™, and the individual's view of how their employer managed health and safety issues during the pandemic. An even stronger correlation is evident between the Mental Health Index™ scores and perception of how well their employer has been supporting the mental health of employees.

- 23 percent indicate that their employer has been managing health and safety inconsistently, poorly or very poorly during the pandemic. The Mental Health Index™ score for this group ranged from -15.0 for those who indicated inconsistently, to -16.6 for those who indicate health and safety being managed poorly to -19.7 for those who indicate very poorly. This compares to -6.2 for those who indicate health and safety being managed somewhat well and 1.7 for very well.
- 32 percent indicate that their employer has been supporting employee mental health inconsistently, poorly or very poorly during pandemic. The Mental Health Index™ score for this group ranged from -12.7 for those who indicated inconsistently, to -14.6 for those who indicate mental health being supported poorly to -20.2 for those who indicate very poorly. This compares to -5.4 for those who indicate mental health being supported somewhat well, and 3.5 for very well. As the country begins to move into the next phase of the pandemic, nearly half of people surveyed (47 percent) feel that they have what

Respondents who reported that their employer managed pandemic risks better had more favorable Mental Health Index™ scores

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they need. The most commonly reported need is clearer guidance on how to prevent spreading/getting the virus (26 percent), followed by the need for support dealing with anxiety (19 percent).

As the country begins to move into the next phase of the pandemic, nearly half of people surveyed (47 percent) feel that they have what they need.

- The most commonly reported need is clearer guidance on how to prevent spreading/getting the virus (26 percent).
- This is followed by the need for support dealing with anxiety (19 percent).

With a mix of social distancing, self-isolation, and the closure of some businesses, the data shows there is likely to be a change in spending habits after the pandemic. A minority (25 percent) indicate that they will return to prior spending habits quickly after the pandemic.

- 34 percent are concerned about the risk of infection from being in stores and service areas
- 24 percent believe that they will be concerned about job security for a while
- 20 percent indicate that their income has changed
- 10 percent do not have the will or energy to do things they did before
- 13 percent are not sure about whether they will return to former spending or not

## 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@morneaushepell.com](mailto:MHI@morneaushepell.com)



# Overview of the Mental Health Index™

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 a given geography, compared to the benchmarks collected in the years of 2017, 2018 and 2019. The increases and decreases in the Index are intended to predict cost and productivity risks, and inform the need for investment in mental health supports by business and government.

## The Mental Health Index™ report has three main 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: In the current and prior two reports, the measures in this section relate to the mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Methodology

The data for this report was collected through an online survey of 5,000 Americans who are living in the United States and are currently employed or who were employed within the prior six months. Participants were selected to be representative of the age, gender, industry and geographic distribution in the United States. The same respondents participate each month to control for changes due to different samples. The respondents were asked to consider the prior two weeks when answering each question. The Mental Health Index™, which launched in April 2020, is published monthly. The benchmark data was collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The data for the current report was collected between May 29 to June 9, 2020.

Collected through an online survey of 5,000 Americans

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## 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. Each individual's scores are added and then divided by the 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 is comprised of data from 2017, 2018 and 2019. This was a period of relative social stability and steady economic growth. **The change relative 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 data compares 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, 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.



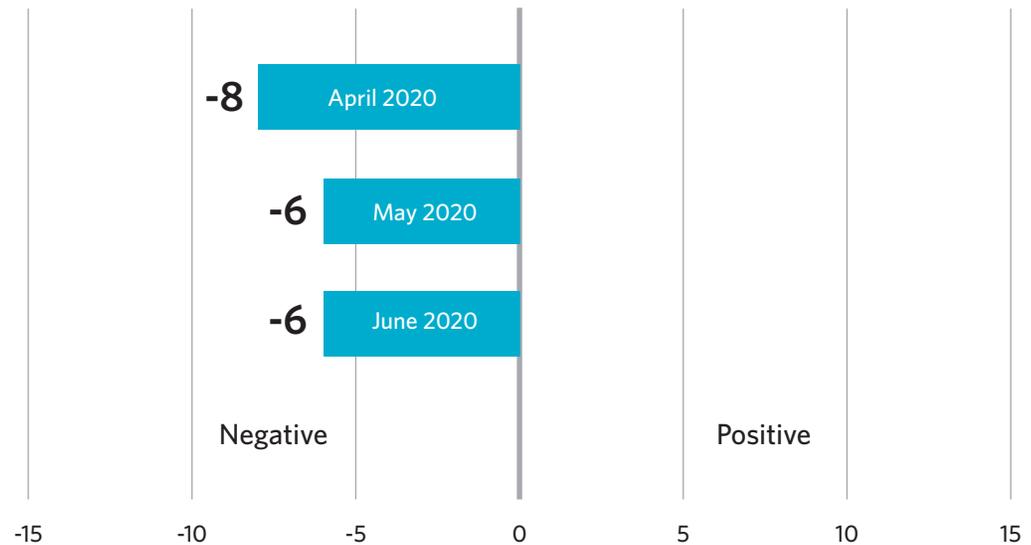
# The Mental Health Index™

The Mental Health Index™ (MHI) is a measure of deviation from the benchmark<sup>3</sup> of mental health and risk. There are modest improvements in all but two sub-scores in June; general psychological health remains the same as the prior month and isolation has worsened slightly. The overall Mental Health Index™ has remained the same as the prior month.

## MHI

<b>Current month</b>	<b>-6</b>
<b>June 2020</b>	
May 2020	-6

MHI sub-scores <sup>3</sup>	June	May
Optimism	-7.9	-8.0
Anxiety	-7.7	-9.0
Work productivity	-6.9	-7.3
Depression	-6.8	-8.1
Isolation	-5.9	-5.7
Psychological health	2.5	2.5
Financial risk	8.6	8.0



The overall Mental Health Index™ is 6 points below the benchmark. The current score of 69 is equivalent to the twenty-sixth percentile of the benchmark.

<sup>3</sup> The benchmark reflects data collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

<sup>4</sup> The demographic breakdown of sub-scores are available upon request.



Employment status	June	May
<b>Employed</b> (no change in hours/salary)	-3.6	-4.5
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	-9.5	-7.9
<b>Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)</b>	-12.2	-12.7
Not currently employed	-11.3	-10.5
Age group	June	May
<b>Age 20-29</b>	-14.2	-14.4
Age 30-39	-11.4	-11.3
Age 40-49	-7.1	-8.5
Age 50-59	-3.3	-3.7
<b>Age 60-69</b>	1.1	1.0
Number of children	June	May
<b>No children in household</b>	-4.7	-5.5
<b>1 child</b>	-9.6	-9.1
2 children	-8.1	-8.7
3 children or more	-6.9	-7.1
Region	June	May
<b>Northeast</b>	-6.9	-7.3
Midwest	-5.4	-6.3
<b>South</b>	-5.2	-5.0
West	-6.0	-7.2

Gender	June	May
<b>Male</b>	-3.3	-4.1
<b>Female</b>	-7.8	-8.2
Income	June	May
<b>Household income &lt;\$30K/annum</b>	-12.8	-13.6
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	-8.7	-9.7
\$60K to <\$100K	-5.6	-5.8
\$100K to \$150K	-3.6	-3.7
<b>\$150K and over</b>	0.8	0.2
Number of adults in household	June	May
One adult in household	-8.5	-9.3
<b>2 adults</b>	-3.8	-4.2
3 adults	-7.7	-8.2
4 adults	-6.1	-6.9
<b>5 adults or more</b>	-11.4	-14.7

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 Health Index™ (industry)

The mental health of individuals in different industries can differ immensely depending upon market and cultural circumstances. The highest mental health scores are observed in Finance and Insurance (-2.8), Public Administration (-3.7), Transportation and Warehousing (-3.8), and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (-3.8). Full-time students have the lowest mental health score (-21.9) by a large margin, followed by Management of Companies and Enterprises (-15.6), and Information and Cultural Industries (-14.5). Improvements from last month are shown in the table below:

Industry	June 2020 MHI	May 2020 MHI	Improvement
Accommodation	-5.0	-10.5	5.5
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	-9.3	-13.9	4.6
Other	-2.9	-6.0	3.1
Other services (except Public Administration)	-4.1	-6.3	2.2
Retail Trade	-6.3	-7.2	1.0
Construction	-4.4	-5.3	0.9
Educational Services	-4.6	-5.5	0.9
Transportation and Warehousing	-3.8	-4.6	0.8
Health Care and Social Assistance	-5.3	-6.1	0.8
Finance and Insurance	-2.8	-3.3	0.6
Public Administration	-3.7	-4.2	0.5
Utilities	-10.0	-10.0	0.0
Manufacturing	-6.2	-6.0	-0.2
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	-3.8	-3.6	-0.2
Food Services	-10.8	-10.5	-0.3
Information and Cultural Industries	-14.5	-14.2	-0.3
I am a student	-21.9	-20.4	-1.5
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	-5.9	-4.0	-1.9
Administrative and Support services	-9.7	-7.6	-2.1
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	-9.5	-7.1	-2.4
Wholesale Trade	-12.2	-9.0	-3.2
Management of Companies and Enterprises	-15.6	-7.0	-8.6

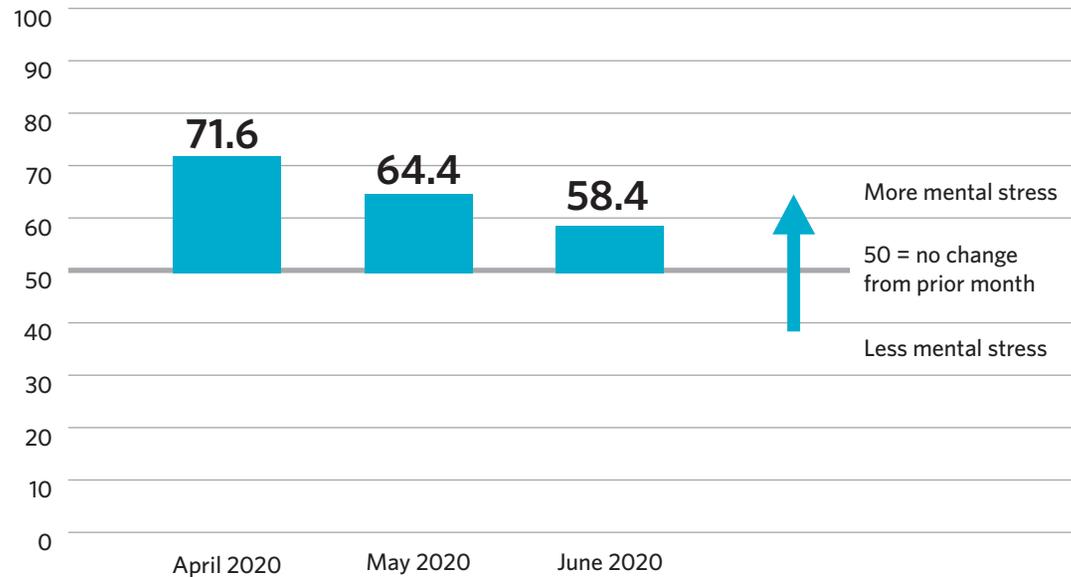


# The Mental Stress Change score

The Mental Stress Change Score (MStressChg) is a measure of the level of reported mental stress, compared to the prior month.

MStress Chg	
Current month June 2020	<b>58.4</b>
May 2020	64.4

The Mental Stress Change score for June 2020 is 58.4. This reflects a continuation of increased mental stress compared to the prior month. The steepness of the increase has, however, been declined month-over-month. This indicates that over one-quarter of the population is experiencing more mental stress when compared to the prior month, with a small proportion experiencing less. An increase in the Mental Stress Change in the last three months, when compared to the benchmark, indicates a significant accumulation of strain in the population.

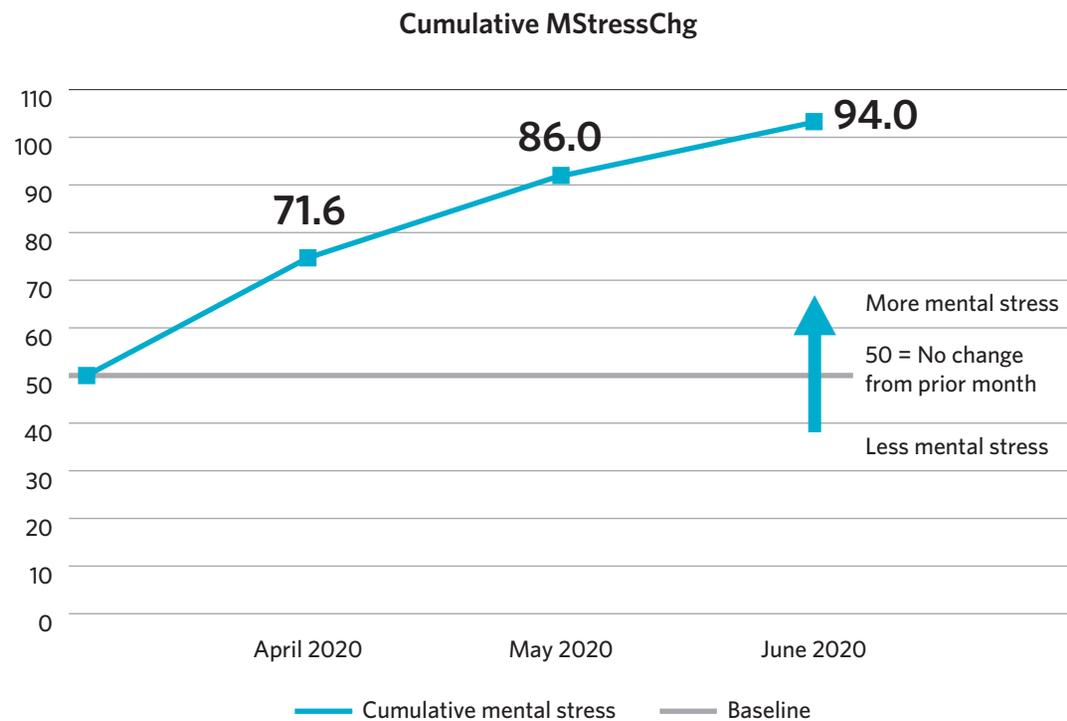




## The Mental Stress Change (cumulative)

The Mental Stress Change Score (MStressChg) is a measure of the level of reported mental stress compared to the prior month. The change is rooted against a value of 50. Fifty indicates no net mental stress change from the previous month, while values above 50 indicate a net increase in mental stress and values below 50 indicate a net decrease in mental stress.

The cumulative mental stress score is shown in the graph below:





Employment status	June	May
<b>Employed (no change in hours/salary)</b>	<b>56.7</b>	<b>62.3</b>
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	61.4	67.9
<b>Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)</b>	<b>63.4</b>	<b>70.3</b>
Not currently employed	62.9	66.7
Age group	June	May
Age 20-29	60.7	<b>67.0</b>
<b>Age 30-39</b>	<b>61.3</b>	65.9
Age 40-49	58.4	65.3
Age 50-59	58.4	64.2
<b>Age 60-69</b>	<b>55.8</b>	<b>61.5</b>
Number of children	June	May
<b>No children in household</b>	<b>57.7</b>	<b>64.1</b>
1 child	60.6	64.5
2 children	59.2	65.3
<b>3 children or more</b>	<b>63.2</b>	<b>67.3</b>
Region	June	May
<b>Northeast</b>	<b>60.5</b>	<b>67.5</b>
<b>Midwest</b>	<b>57.4</b>	64.4
South	57.9	<b>61.9</b>
West	58.2	64.9

Gender	June	May
<b>Male</b>	<b>56.2</b>	<b>62.4</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>60.3</b>	<b>66.1</b>
Income	June	May
Household income <\$30K/annum	56.8	63.0
<b>\$30K to &lt;\$60K/annum</b>	<b>59.3</b>	65.2
\$60K to <\$100K	58.8	<b>65.3</b>
\$100K to \$150K	59.1	63.6
<b>\$150K and over</b>	<b>56.1</b>	<b>62.6</b>
Number of adults in household	June	May
One adult in household	58.4	<b>63.8</b>
<b>2 adults</b>	<b>58.2</b>	64.1
3 adults	59.0	66.7
4 adults	58.5	65.4
<b>5 adults or more</b>	<b>64.3</b>	<b>72.0</b>

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)

The mental health of individuals in different industries can differ immensely depending upon market and cultural circumstances. The most favorable mental stress changes are observed in Real Estate, Rental and Leasing (53.5), Public Administration (54.9), and Other (55). The least favorable mental stress changes are observed in Management of Companies and Enterprises (66.7), Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (64.4), and Information and Cultural Industries (63.5). **Every industry has reported an increase in mental stress for two consecutive months.** Mental Stress changes from the last two months are shown in the table below:

Industry	June 2020 MStress Chg	May 2020 MStress Chg
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	53.5	65.2
Public Administration	54.9	58.5
Other	55.0	60.7
Construction	55.5	64.0
Transportation and Warehousing	55.8	59.0
Utilities	56.5	60.6
Other services (except Public Administration)	57.1	65.2
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	57.6	65.5
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	57.7	63.9
Finance and Insurance	57.9	62.6
Retail Trade	57.9	64.1
Educational Services	57.9	66.4
Food Services	58.3	67.3
Accommodation	59.0	72.1
Wholesale Trade	59.3	65.3
I am a student	60.3	58.9
Health Care and Social Assistance	60.7	66.9
Manufacturing	60.8	64.3
Administrative and Support services	61.2	60.8
Information and Cultural Industries	63.5	67.2
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	64.4	69.6
Management of Companies and Enterprises	66.7	62.2

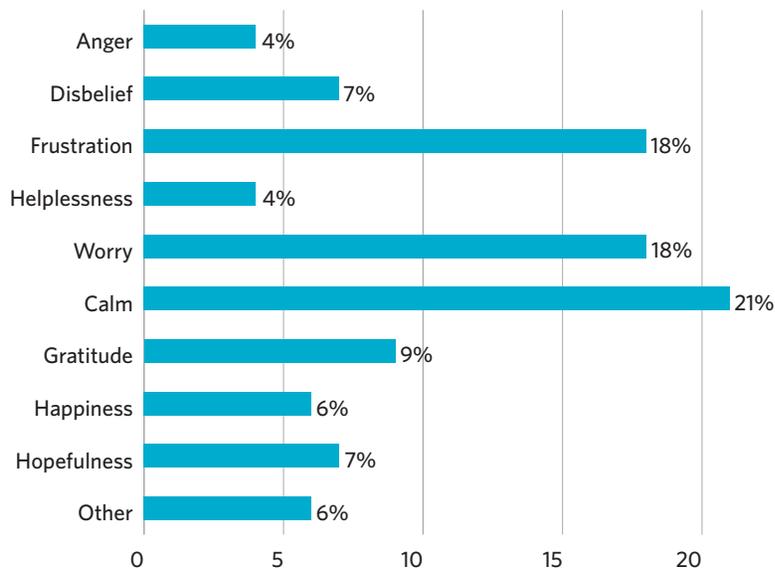
For the second consecutive month, all industries have reported an increase in mental stress



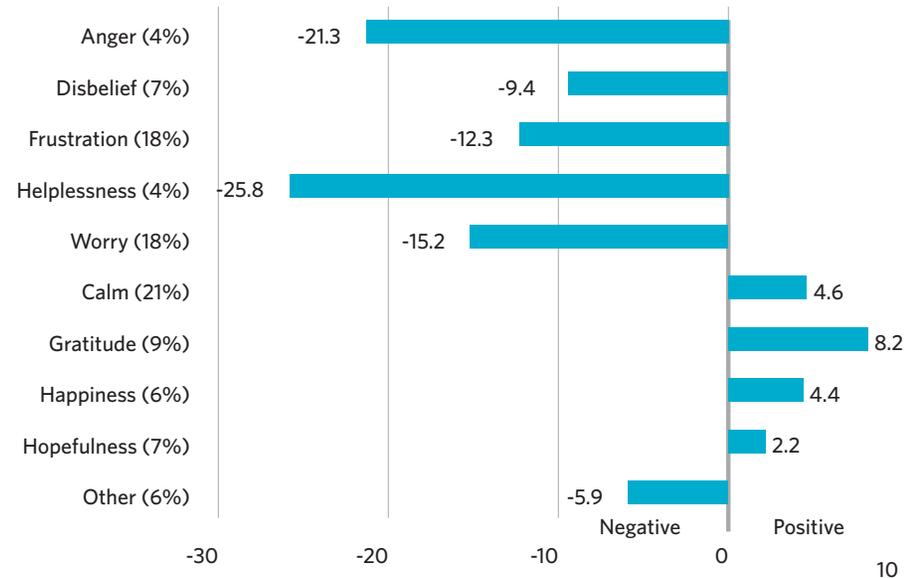
# Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on emotional state

After months of social distancing, job losses and the threat of contracting COVID-19, emotions are high. The most commonly reported emotion is calm (21 percent), followed by worry (18 percent), and frustration (18 percent). Individuals feeling more positive emotions (i.e. calm, happiness, hopefulness, or gratitude) have much higher Mental Health Index™ scores than individuals feeling more negative emotions (i.e. anger, disbelief, frustration, helplessness, and worry). A deeper examination of the data shows that the profiles (e.g. age, gender, household income) of individuals choosing positive emotions are not remarkably different from individuals reporting negative emotions. This suggests that an individual’s personal outlook contributes significantly to how well that individual copes with the strain of the pandemic, and this effect is reflected in the Mental Health Index™ scores.

Main emotion experienced right now

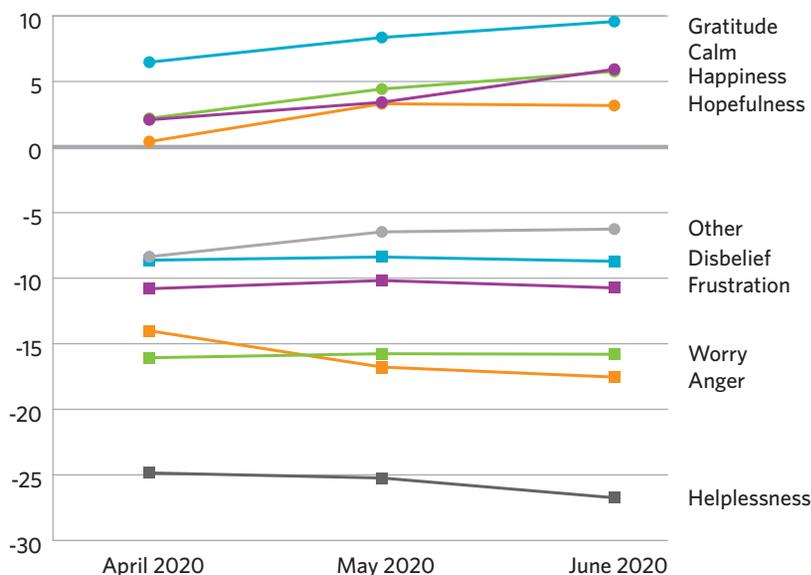


Mental Health Index™ by main emotion experienced

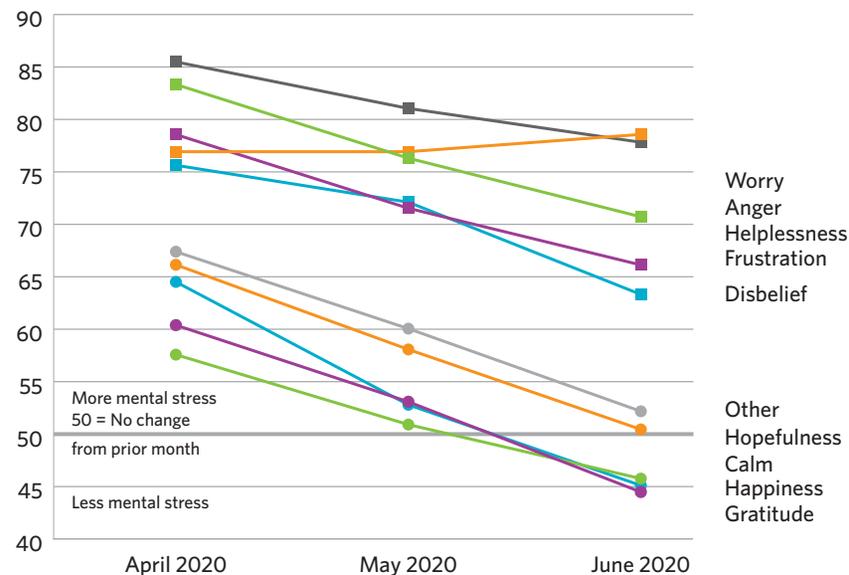




Mental Health Index™ by emotion



Mental Stress Change by emotion



More mental stress  
50 = No change  
from prior month  
Less mental stress

Considering the trend of individual scores the graph below shows that individuals feeling more positive emotions have significantly higher Mental Health Index™ scores and are generally improving in their mental health scores. Individuals experiencing more negative emotions are not demonstrating an improving mental health trend and have significantly lower scores.

A further examination of mental stress changes based on the primary emotion being felt shows that individuals feeling positive emotions have continually improved their mental stress and, in the most recent data, these individuals are also more likely to feel less mental stress when compared to the previous month. Individuals who are mainly experiencing negative emotions are more likely to continue to feel more mental stress than the previous month. Mental stress is improved across all emotional states with the exception of individuals feeling anger as the primary emotion. These individuals have an increase in the steepness in mental stress in June 2020 over May 2020.



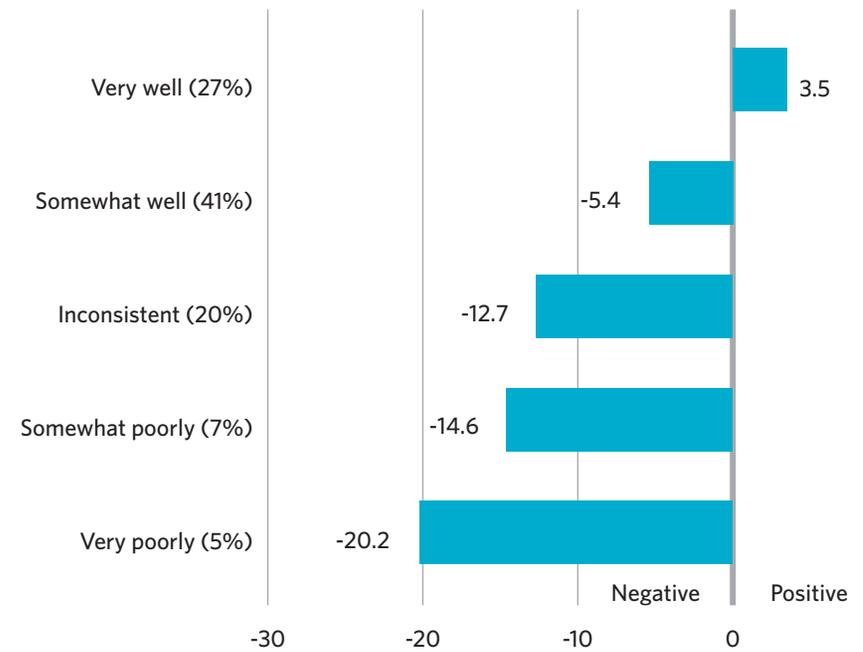
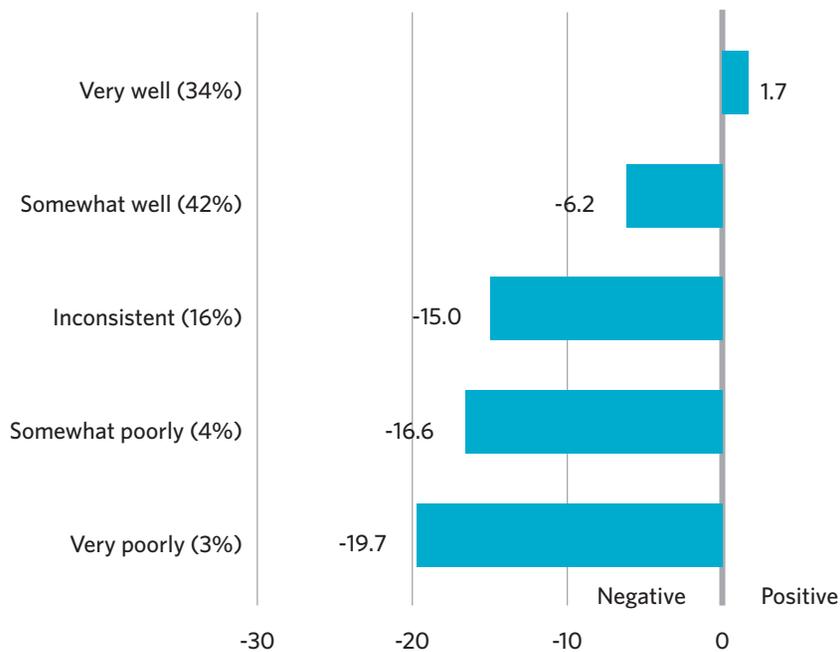
# Employer support during the pandemic

Generally, individuals are satisfied with the manner in which their employers have handled the pandemic. Just over three-quarters of respondents (77 percent) report that their employers managed the health and safety risks “somewhat well” to “very well”. Respondents who reported that their employer managed pandemic risks better had more favorable Mental Health Index™ scores.

Similarly, sixty-nine percent of respondents report that their employers supported their mental health needs during the pandemic. A trend of better Mental Health Index™ scores of those working for employers that better supported mental health needs was observed. Individuals who reported that their employers supported their mental health needs “very well” had an average Mental Health Index™ score of 3.5, which is slightly above the benchmark.

**Mental Health Index™ by employer management of health & safety risk**

**Mental Health Index™ by employer support of mental health needs**

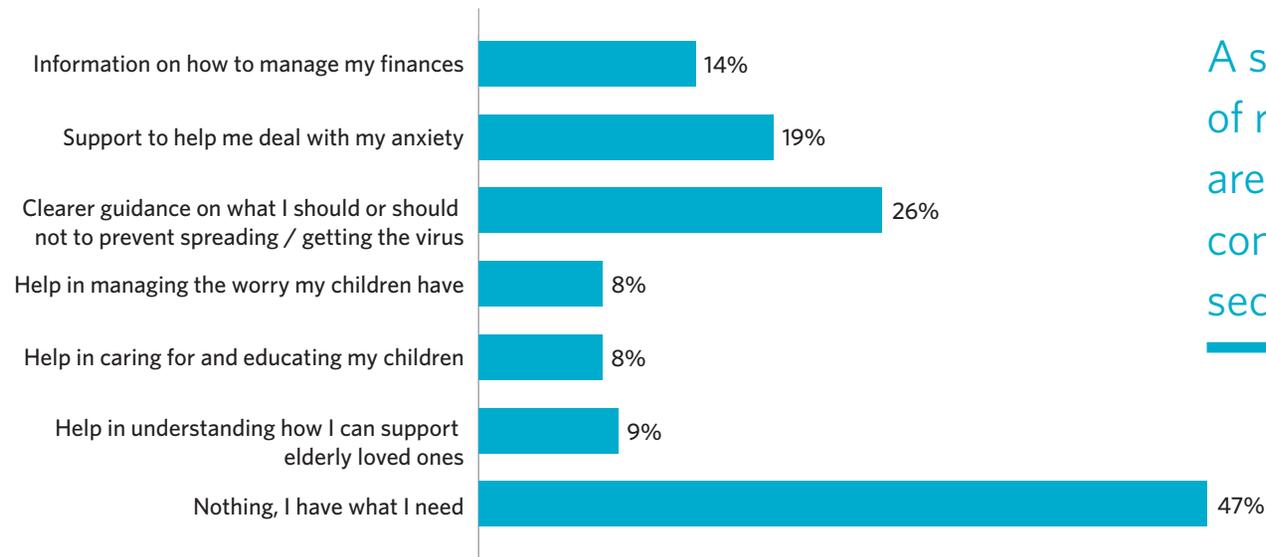




# Current needs and moving forward after a pandemic

As the country begins to move into the next phase of the pandemic, nearly half of people surveyed (47 percent) feel that they have what they need. The most commonly reported need is clearer guidance on how to prevent spreading/getting the virus (26 percent), followed by the need for support dealing with anxiety (19 percent).

**What do you feel you need right now as a result of the pandemic?**

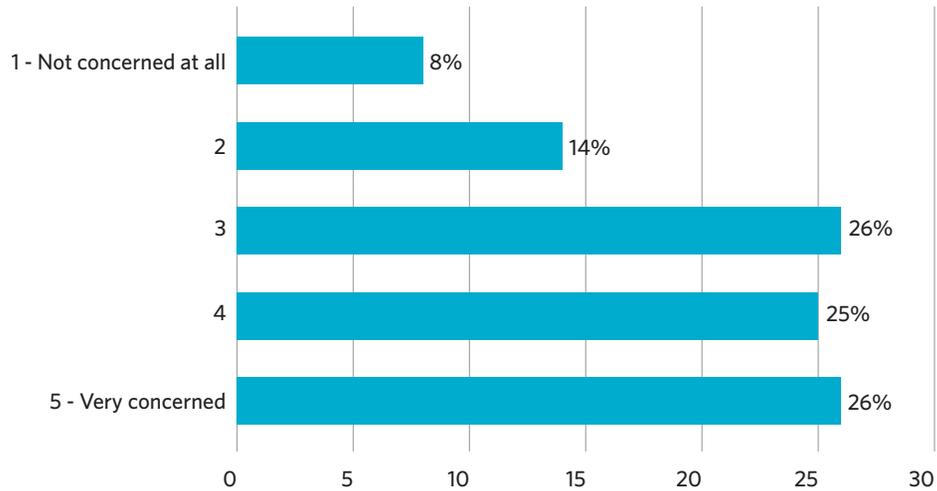


A significant proportion of respondents (78%) are moderately to very concerned about a second wave of COVID-19

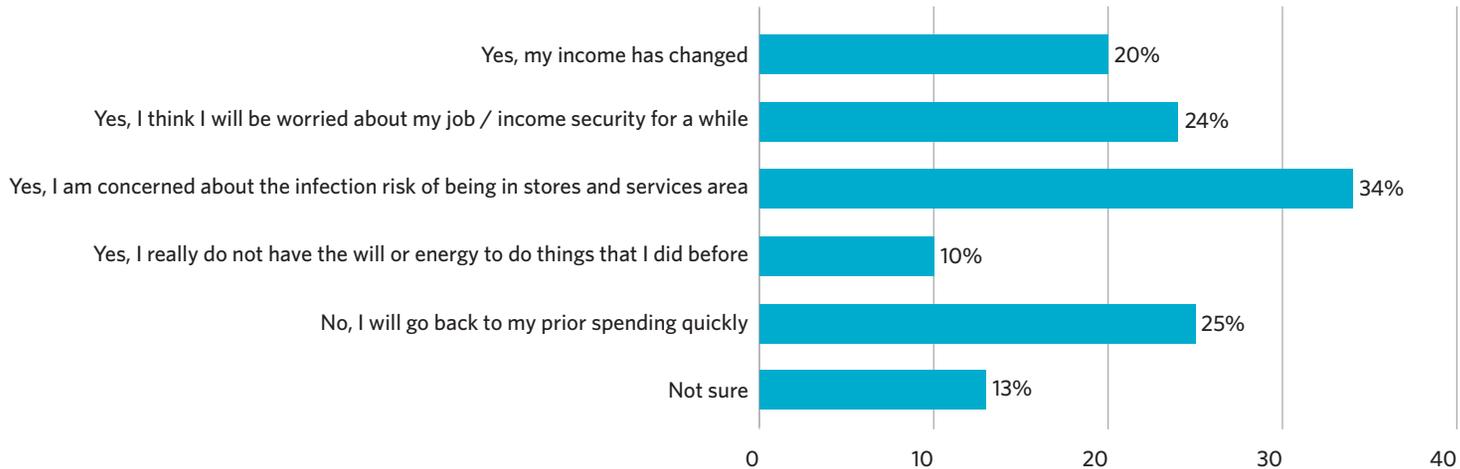


With a mix of social distancing, self-isolation, and the closure of some businesses, the data also shows that there is likely to be a change in spending habits after the pandemic. Only twenty-five percent of respondents are likely to return to their previous spending habits. The main barrier given for not returning to previous spending habits is a concern about infection risk of being in stores and service areas (34 percent). The second most common barrier is a worry about job/income security (24 percent), followed by a change in income (20 percent).

### Respondent concern for a second wave of COVID-19



### Are there barriers to you returning to your prior spending habits?





## Implications

The current scores for The Mental Health Index™ are a clear warning regarding the mental health impact of the pandemic. The Index shows a significant decrease in the mental health in the United States. We also see a significant increase in mental stress compared to the prior month and a definitive link to issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the physical health risk of COVID-19 is the focus of much attention, the mental health impact requires similar attention and action. Well after the risk of infection reduces, the mental health impact may remain. This has implications for the quality of life of individuals, the stability of families, the risk of health and disability costs for organizations as well as the level of participation in the economy, which is a concern for government, given its impact on the speed of economic recovery.

### To address this situation, action is required on at least three levels:

1. **Individuals** need to attend to the impact of the pandemic on their mental health. While some strain would be expected as a result of such a massive change, feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope, or feeling stuck and unable to adapt, are clear warning signs requiring support from a trusted confidante or a counseling professional.
2. **Businesses** need to attend to the risk among employees. The Mental Health Index™ measures the mental health risk and status of the working population. The current scores suggest a risk to the longer-term wellbeing of employees, which may impact business productivity, health costs and disability absence. Business would do well to increase the focus on mental health through communication that increases the awareness of mental health warning signs, campaigns to reduce the stigma of seeking mental health support, and the promotion of health plans and public resources.
3. **Governments** need to attend to the mental health of the population. A population under strain is less likely to participate fully in the economy. The current focus on health and safety needs to expand to include a significant focus on mental health. This should include clear messages regarding coping strategies and the promotion of public resources.

The Mental Health Index™ is published monthly, and measures trends over time.

Morneau Shepell is a leading provider of technology-enabled HR services that deliver an integrated approach to employee wellbeing through our cloud-based platform. Our focus is providing world-class solutions to our clients to support the mental, physical, social and financial wellbeing of their people. By improving lives, we improve business. Our approach spans services in employee and family assistance, health and wellness, recognition, pension and benefits administration, retirement consulting, actuarial and investment services. Morneau Shepell employs approximately 6,000 employees who work with some 24,000 client organizations that use our services in 162 countries. Morneau Shepell inc. is a publicly traded company on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX: MSI). For more information, visit [morneaushepell.com](http://morneaushepell.com).

