

The Mental Health Index™ report

Canada, June 2020

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





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Executive summary

As June got underway, the rate of daily new COVID-19 cases and related deaths continues to decline nationally. For Canadians, lives are starting to return to the “new normal” as significant social restrictions are easing in many provinces. The economy is gradually reopening as a range of sectors resume operations and access to more services improves across the country. Both Quebec and Ontario continue to report higher numbers of daily COVID-19 cases than other parts of Canada. Localized higher daily case counts, particularly in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Areas (GTHA), mean that people living in the GTHA continue to live under significantly more restrictive measures than those living in other parts of Ontario, and the country.

While Canadians have succeeded in helping flatten the curve of COVID-19, most provinces remain under a state of emergency/public health emergency. Federal support programs continue to provide financial critical relief for Canadians affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Qualifying individuals will continue to have access to the Canadian Emergency Relief Benefit (CERB) through to August. Businesses are being encouraged to access financial support through the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy to help them rehire employees and kick start the economy.

Public health officials continue to advocate for physical distancing and good hand hygiene as social measures relax, people gather in larger groups, and more return to work. Mask wearing is becoming mainstream. As of June 1st, schools remain closed in most provinces, except for full reopening in Quebec (excluding Montreal), part-time reopening in British Columbia, and partial reopening in Manitoba and Prince Edward Island. The Canada-US border continues to be closed to all non-essential travel. 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 Canadians.



In the first half of the month, unprecedented awareness of anti-Black racism emerged. Outrage and protests were sparked by the high-profile death of a Black American, George Floyd, during arrest in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Canadians have marched peacefully in “Black Lives Matter” protests. Significant emotion accompanied the greater awareness of anti-Black racism and events prior to and after the George Floyd incident.

Mental Health Index™

The overall Mental Health Index™ for June 2020 is -11 points. This index represents the deviation from 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. An 11-point decrease from the pre COVID-19 benchmark¹ reflects a population whose mental health is similar to the most distressed 1 per cent of the benchmark population. June is the third consecutive month of an extremely low Mental Health Index™. There is little change from April 2020 (-12) and May (-12).

The lowest Mental Health Index™ sub-score is for the risk measure of anxiety (-12.9 points), followed by depression (-12.7), work productivity (-12.1), optimism (-12.0), and isolation (-11.6).

- There are modest improvements across all sub-scores in June, with the exception of general psychological health which has remained the same as the prior month.
- A decline in the overall Mental Health Index™ is observed only for individuals with 3 or more children, those whose salary had been reduced and those recently unemployed.
- Overall, the financial score continues to improve with a score of 2.4 points; an improvement month-over-month since April. This suggests that Canadians are continuing to monitor their savings as a result of this crisis. That said, those without emergency savings experience a lower score in mental health (-24.0) than the overall group. As well, people with no emergency fund have uniformly low scores on the Mental Health Index™.

The overall Mental Health Index™ for June 2020 is -11 points, up one point from the prior month

¹ The raw score for the Mental Health Index™ benchmark is 75/100. The June 2020 score is 64/100.



Eleven per cent of respondents are unemployed. Of those who participated in the Mental Health Index™ in all three months and were employed in April 2020, 39 per cent 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, 28 per cent, are back to full employment.
- Of those that saw a reduction in hours or salary, 64 per cent are still working under those conditions, and 3 per cent of those individuals ultimately lost their jobs.
- Individuals reporting reduced salary from last month have a lower Mental Health Index™ score than those with a reduction in hours and is consistent with individuals not employed.
- Regardless of employment status, there continues to be a lower mental health score for females (-13.9) when compared to males (-9.2). 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 Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction (-7.2), Automotive (-8), and Construction (-8.6) industries.

- The lowest mental health scores are found in Full-time students (-21.7), Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (-16.7), and Accommodation and Food Services (-16.1).
- Individuals employed in Utilities, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting, as well as Arts, Entertainment and Recreation have had a decline in mental health since last month whereas individuals in Automotive, Real Estate, Rental and Leasing, as well as Information and Cultural industries have seen the greatest improvement.
- Individuals in Health Care and Social Assistance show subtle improvement yet again this month (-10.0) when compared to May (-11.0) and April (-12.3) 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 60.4. This indicates that nearly 30 per cent of the population is experiencing more mental stress 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 is for respondents living in Newfoundland and Labrador (64.4), British Columbia (61.6), followed by Ontario (61.3). Respondents living in provinces where the increase in mental stress is lower, still had significant increases. They include the Maritimes (58.0), Quebec (58.3), followed by Alberta (60.3).

- 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).
- 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 Retail Trade industries are less steep 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.

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



- Overall, 57 per cent reported a negative emotion as their primary emotion (anger, frustration, worry, anxiety, disbelief, helplessness).
- The most commonly reported emotion is worry (23 per cent), followed by calm (19 per cent), and frustration (19 per cent).
- 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 profile (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 scores from April 2020 to June 2020, individuals who report more positive emotions have significantly higher Mental Health Index™ scores and their mental health scores are generally improving.

- 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.

A higher MHI score is observed for individuals reporting that their employers supported their mental health needs during the pandemic



- 25 per cent 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 -19.3 for those who indicated inconsistently, to -17.2 for those who indicate health and safety being managed poorly to -26.4 for those who indicate very poorly. This compares to -11.6 for those who indicate health and safety being managed somewhat well and -2.6 for very well.
- 34 per cent indicate that their employer has been supporting mental health inconsistently, poorly or very poorly during the pandemic. The Mental Health Index™ score for this group ranged from -17.2 for those who indicated inconsistently, to -17.7 for those who indicate mental health being supported poorly to -26.3 for those who indicate very poorly. This compares to -10.4 for those who indicate mental health being supported somewhat well, and -1.0 for very well.

As the country begins to move into the next phase of the pandemic, forty per cent of people feel that they have what they need.

- The most commonly reported need is clearer guidance on how to prevent spreading/getting the virus (27 per cent),
- This is followed by the need for support to deal with anxiety (23 per cent).

With a mix of social distancing, self-isolation, and the closure of some businesses, the data shows that there is likely to be a change in spending habits after the pandemic. Only nineteen per cent of respondents are likely to return to their previous spending habits.

- 39 per cent are concerned about the risk of infection from being in stores and service areas
- 27 per cent believe that they will be concerned about job security for a while
- 22 per cent indicate that their income has changed
- 14 per cent do not have the will or energy to do things they did before
- 14 per cent 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



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: For the current and immediately foreseeable future, 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 3,000 Canadians who are living in Canada 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 Canada. 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 3,000 Canadians



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.



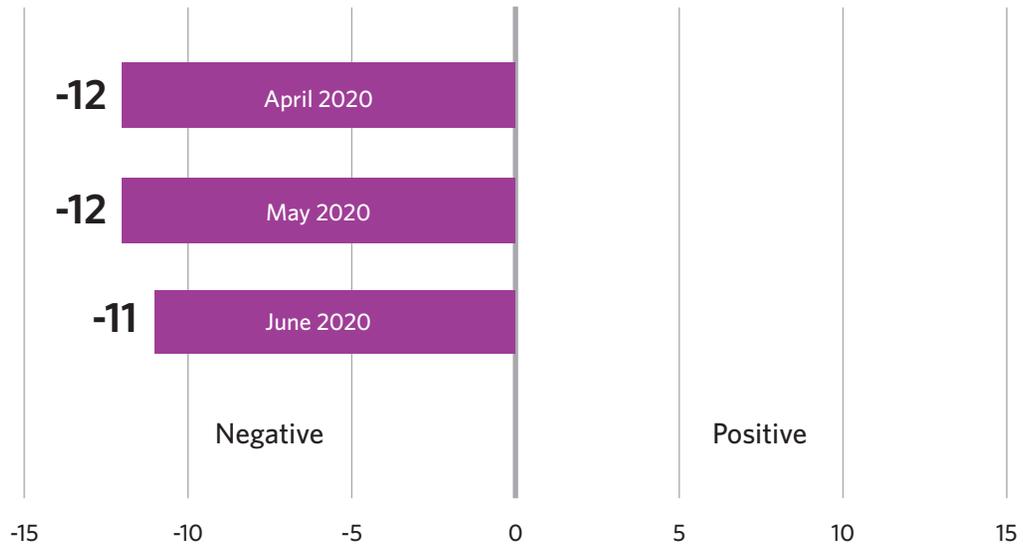
The Mental Health Index™

The Mental Health Index™ (MHI) is a measure of deviation from the benchmark² of mental health and risk. There are modest improvements in all scores and The Mental Health Index™ is up one point from the prior month.

MHI

Current month June 2020	-11
May 2020	-12

MHI sub-scores ³	June	May
Anxiety	-12.9	-14.0
Depression	-12.7	-13.9
Work productivity	-12.1	-13.5
Optimism	-12.0	-12.3
Isolation	-11.6	-11.9
Psychological health	-1.2	-1.2
Financial risk	2.4	1.1



The overall Mental Health Index™ is 11 points below the benchmark. The current score is equivalent to the first percentile of the benchmark.

² The benchmark reflects data collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019.
³ The demographic breakdown of sub-scores are available upon request.



Employment status	June	May
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	-8.5	-9.4
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	-14.6	-14.3
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	-16.4	-15.4
Not currently employed	-16.5	-15.2
Age group	June	May
Age 20-29	-20.3	-21.4
Age 30-39	-15.5	-16.9
Age 40-49	-12.4	-12.7
Age 50-59	-7.8	-7.8
Age 60-69	-4.3	-4.8
Number of children	June	May
No children in household	-9.7	-10.7
1 child	-13.8	-13.7
2 children	-13.5	-13.4
3 children or more	-11.1	-9.2
Province	June	May
Alberta	-12.9	-13.2
British Columbia	-10.9	-11.2
Manitoba	-12.9	-13.4
Newfoundland and Labrador	-6.5	-8.2
The Maritimes	-9.7	-12.3
Quebec	-10.9	-12.3
Ontario	-10.7	-11.0
Saskatchewan	-8.3	-8.2

Gender	June	May
Male	-9.0	-9.2
Female	-12.8	-13.9
Income	June	May
Household income <\$30K/annum	-18.5	-18.9
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	-14.5	-15.7
\$60K to <\$100K	-11.4	-11.6
\$100K to \$150K	-6.8	-7.0
Number of adults in household	June	May
One adult in household	-13.3	-15.0
2 adults	-9.6	-10.0
3 adults	-12.0	-11.3
4 adults	-10.2	-12.7
5 adults or more	-13.2	-13.9

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



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 Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction (-7.2), Automotive (-8), and Construction (-8.6). Full-time students have the lowest mental health scores followed by Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (-16.7), and Accommodation and Food Services (-16.1) industries. Improvements from last month are shown in the table below:

Industry	June 2020 MHI	May 2020 MHI	Improvement
Automotive Industry	-8.0	-13.0	5.0
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	-10.0	-14.3	4.3
Information and Cultural Industries	-10.6	-13.7	3.2
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	-7.2	-9.3	2.1
Other services (except Public Administration)	-11.8	-13.8	2.0
Wholesale Trade	-8.7	-10.0	1.4
Construction	-8.6	-9.7	1.2
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	-10.3	-11.4	1.1
Health Care and Social Assistance	-10.0	-11.0	1.0
Retail Trade	-10.3	-11.2	1.0
Manufacturing	-8.8	-9.7	0.9
Finance and Insurance	-12.3	-13.1	0.9
Public Administration	-10.8	-11.6	0.8
Transportation and Warehousing	-9.6	-10.3	0.7
Accommodation and Food Services	-16.1	-16.8	0.6
Educational Services	-11.9	-11.1	-0.8
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	-16.7	-15.5	-1.2
Management of Companies and Enterprises	-13.8	-12.5	-1.2
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	-13.8	-12	-1.8
Other	-11.6	-8.8	-2.7
Utilities	-11.6	-6.1	-5.5

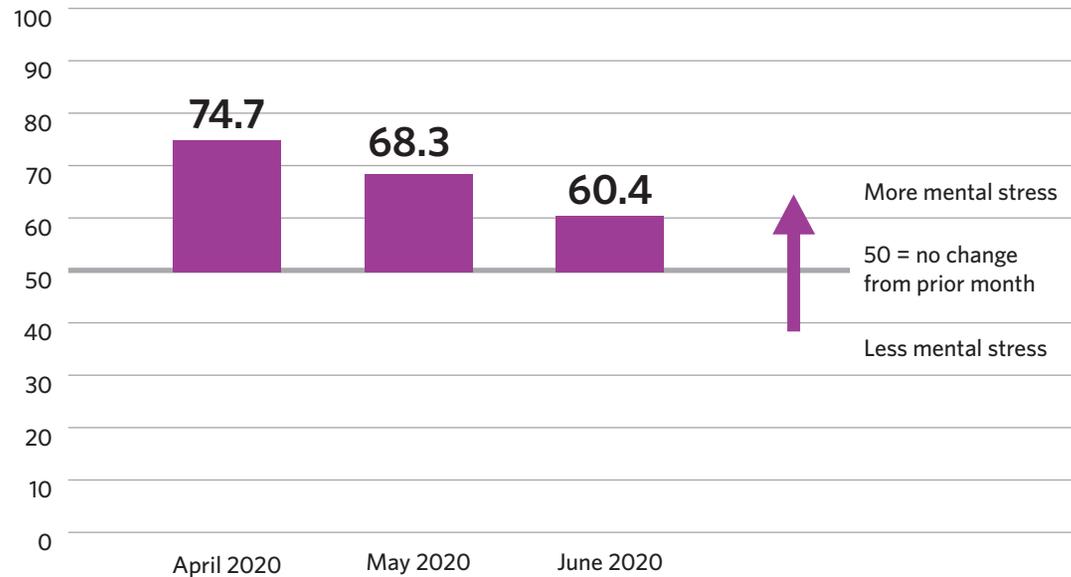


The Mental Stress Change score

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

MStress Chg	
Current month June 2020	60.4
May 2020	68.3

The Mental Stress Change score for June 2020 is 60.4. This reflects an increase in mental stress compared to the prior month. The steepness of the increase has, however, been declining month-over-month. The current score indicates that nearly 30 per cent of the population is experiencing more mental stress 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.

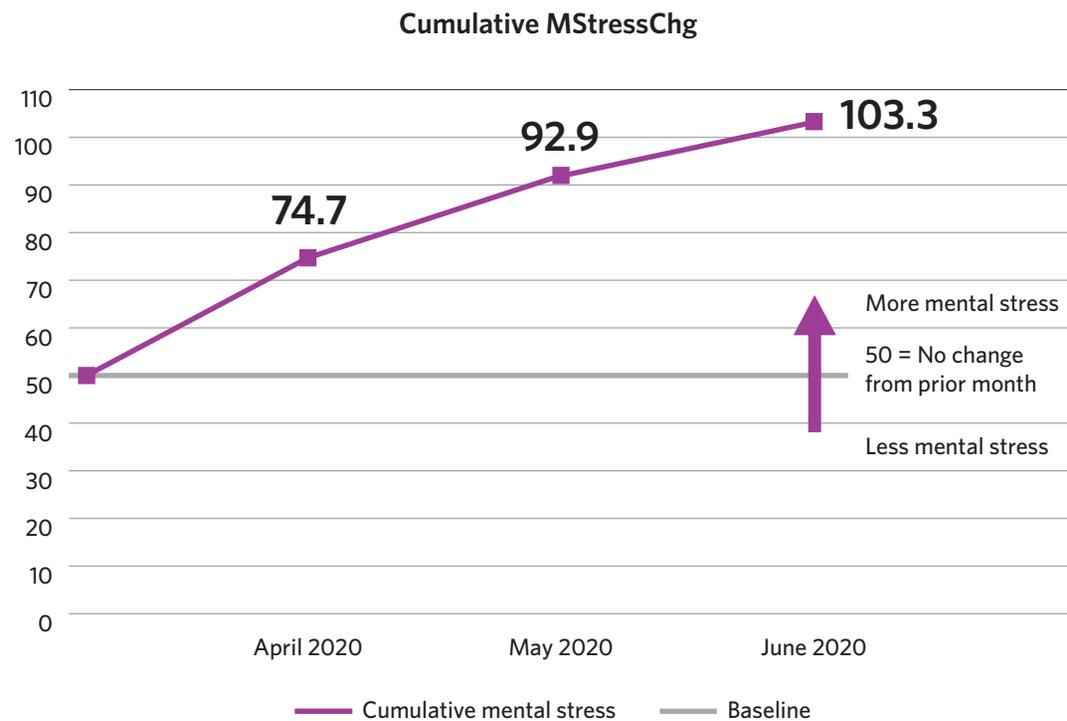




The Mental Stress Change (cumulative)

The Mental Stress Change (MStressChg) score 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
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	58.3	66.1
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	66.3	72.9
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	67.5	74.2
Not currently employed	59.7	67.2
Age group	June	May
Age 20-29	62.7	71.3
Age 30-39	65.5	70.5
Age 40-49	61.1	69.1
Age 50-59	58.3	68.3
Age 60-69	55.6	63.8
Number of children	June	May
No children in household	59.1	67.5
1 child	63.3	70.6
2 children	63.1	69.9
3 children or more	62.0	63.3
Province	June	May
Alberta	60.3	68.8
British Columbia	61.6	71.0
Manitoba	60.7	65.3
Newfoundland and Labrador	64.4	66.7
The Maritimes	58.0	68.5
Quebec	58.3	68.4
Ontario	61.3	67.7
Saskatchewan	61.1	65.2

Gender	June	May
Male	59.8	66.0
Female	61.0	70.6
Income	June	May
Household income <\$30K/annum	61.0	68.5
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	59.3	68.4
\$60K to <\$100K	60.8	68.6
\$100K to \$150K	60.6	67.9
Number of adults in household	June	May
One adult in household	60.3	69.4
2 adults	60.1	68.0
3 adults	61.9	67.5
4 adults	61.7	67.3
5 adults or more	55.0	69.8

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 favourable mental stress changes are observed in Automotive Industry (53.2), Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction (56.3), and Retail Trade (56.4). Full-time students have the least favourable 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 for three 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
Automotive Industry	53.2	64.0
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	56.3	64.8
Retail Trade	56.4	68.6
Information and Cultural Industries	57.3	62.5
Manufacturing	58.5	65.4
Transportation and Warehousing	58.6	66.0
Finance and Insurance	59.2	72.0
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	59.4	67.9
Wholesale Trade	59.8	69.1
Other	59.9	58.9
Construction	60.6	68.7
Public Administration	60.7	71.3
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	61.7	72.8
Accommodation and Food Services	62.1	68.5
Health Care and Social Assistance	62.2	70.2
Educational Services	62.3	72.3
Other services (except Public Administration)	62.5	69.5
Utilities	64.4	62.5
Management of Companies and Enterprises	65.0	62.0
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	65.6	60.0
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	67.1	73.2
Full-time student	67.5	x*

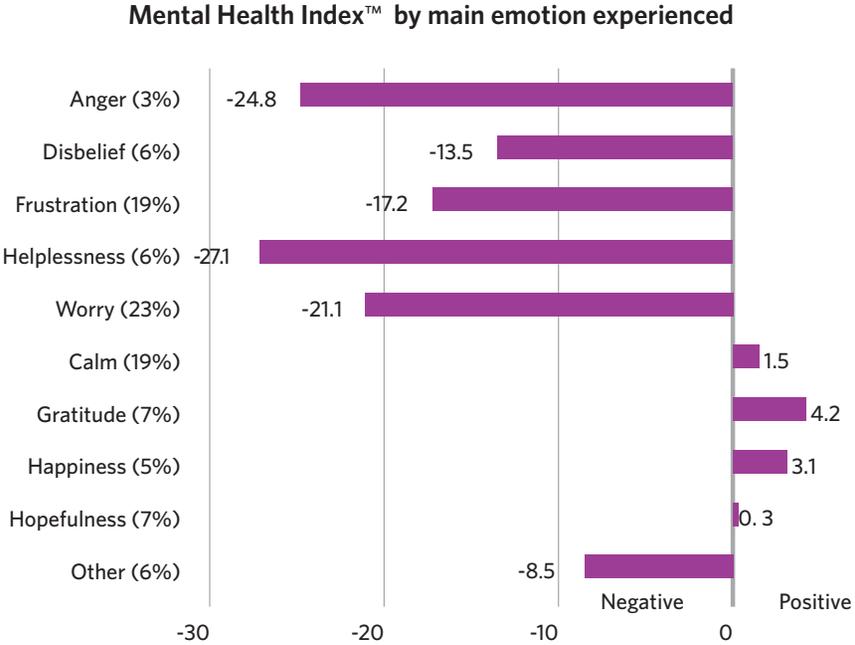
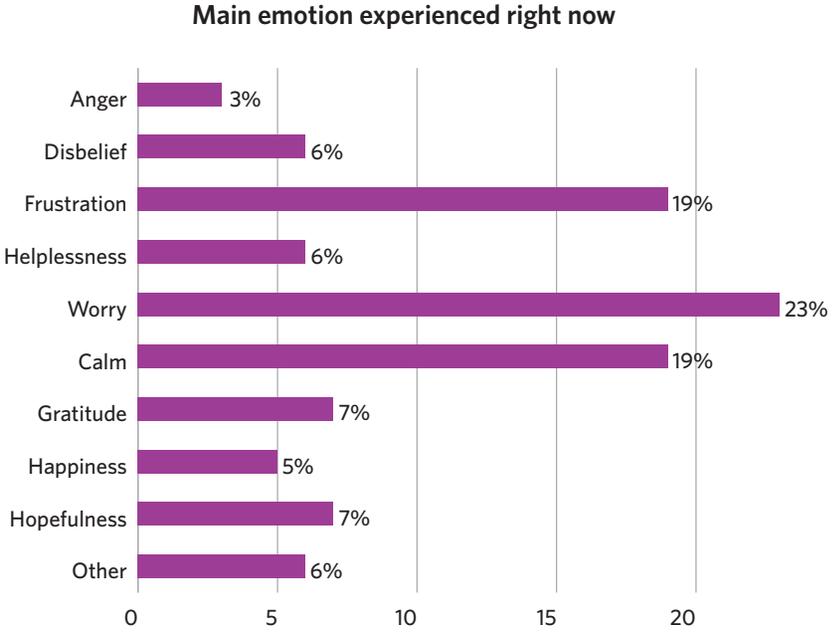
For the third consecutive month, all industries have reported an increase in mental stress

* Industries with an "x" do not meet the minimum threshold for reporting.



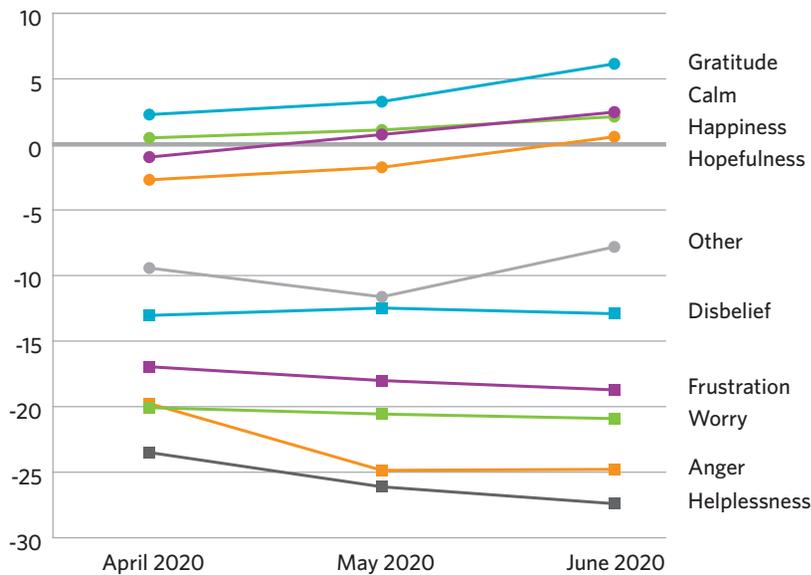
Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on emotional state

After months of social distancing, job losses and the threat of contracting COVID-19, emotions are high. The most commonly reported emotion is worry (23 per cent), followed by calm (19 per cent), and frustration (19 per cent). 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.

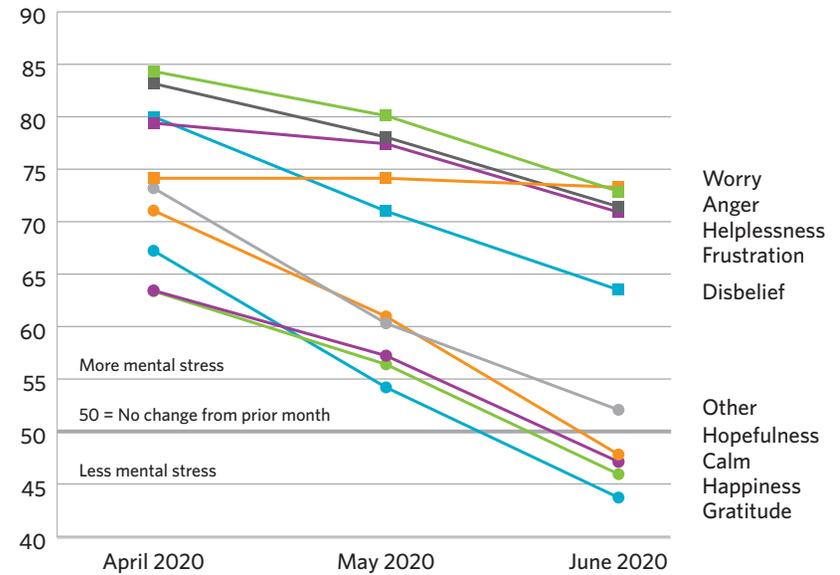




Mental Health Index™ by emotion



Mental Stress Change by emotion



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 mental stress change in June 2020 over May 2020.

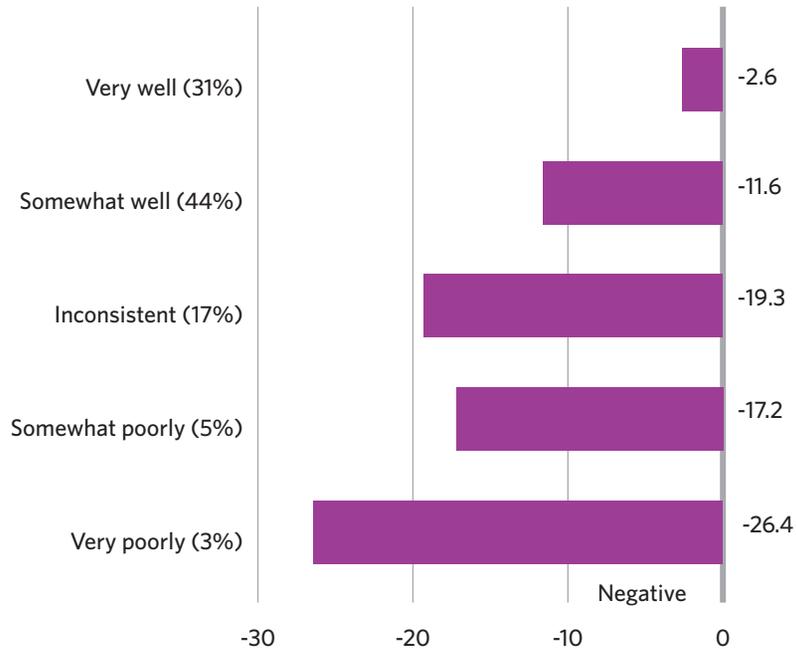


Employer support during the pandemic

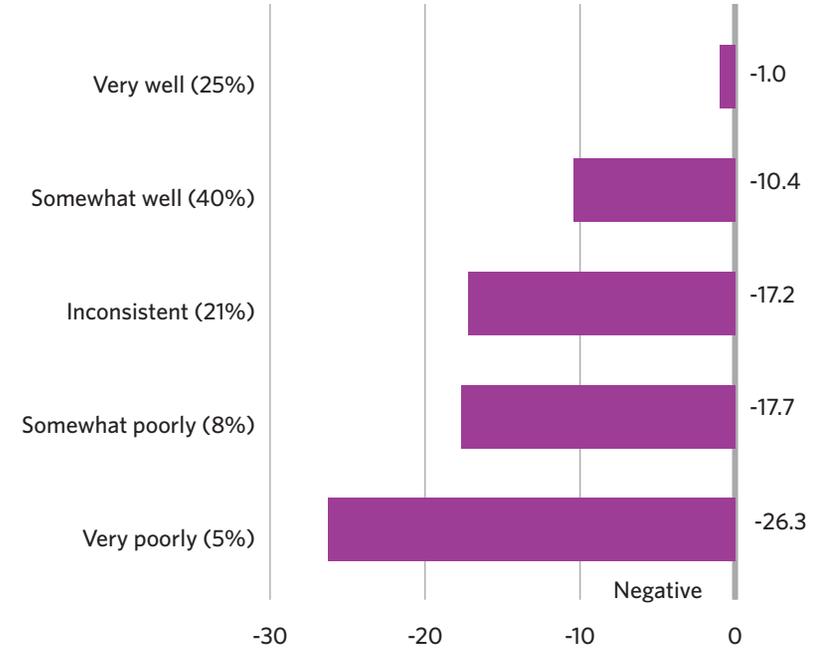
Generally, individuals are satisfied with the manner in which their employers have handled the pandemic. Three-quarters of respondents report that their employers managed the health and safety risks somewhat well to very well. The result of employer management of the pandemic is reflected in the mental health index scores which show a clear trend of higher Mental Health Index™ scores for respondents working for employers that managed pandemic risks better.

Similarly, sixty-five per cent 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 -1, which is only slightly below the benchmark.

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



Mental Health Index™ by employer support of mental health needs

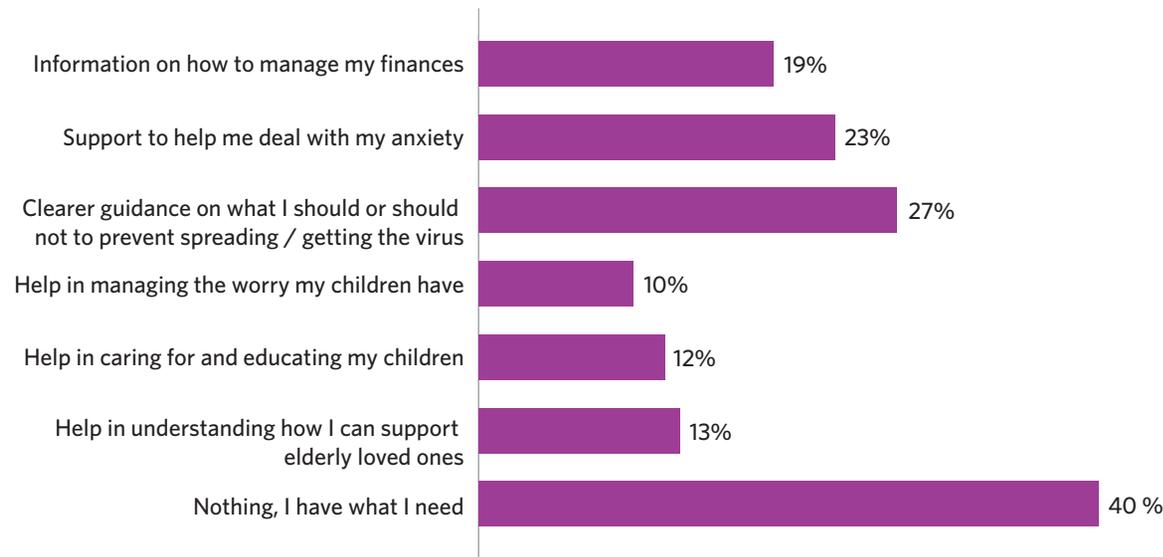




Current needs and moving forward after the pandemic

As the country begins to move into the next phase of the pandemic, forty per cent of people feel that they have what they need. The most commonly reported need is clearer guidance on how to prevent spreading/getting the virus (27 per cent), followed by the need for support dealing with anxiety (23 per cent).

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

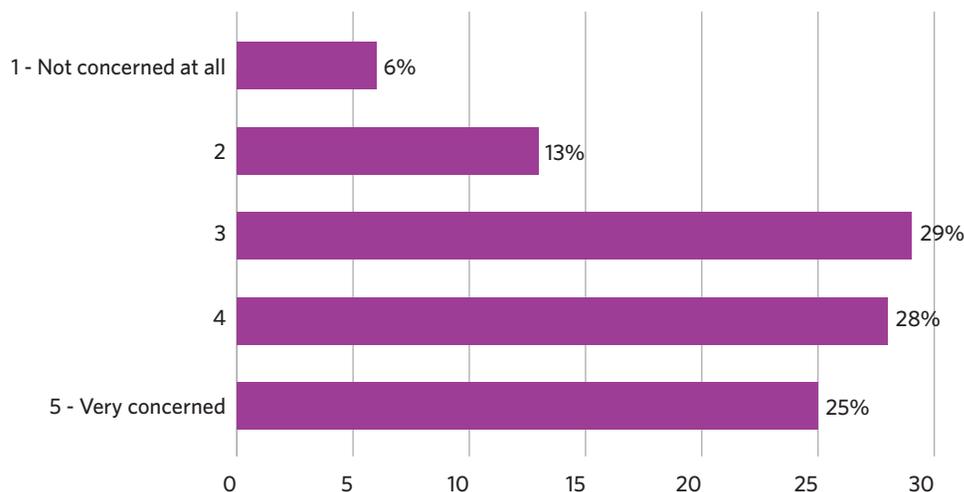


A significant proportion of respondents (81%) are moderately to very concerned about a second wave of COVID-19

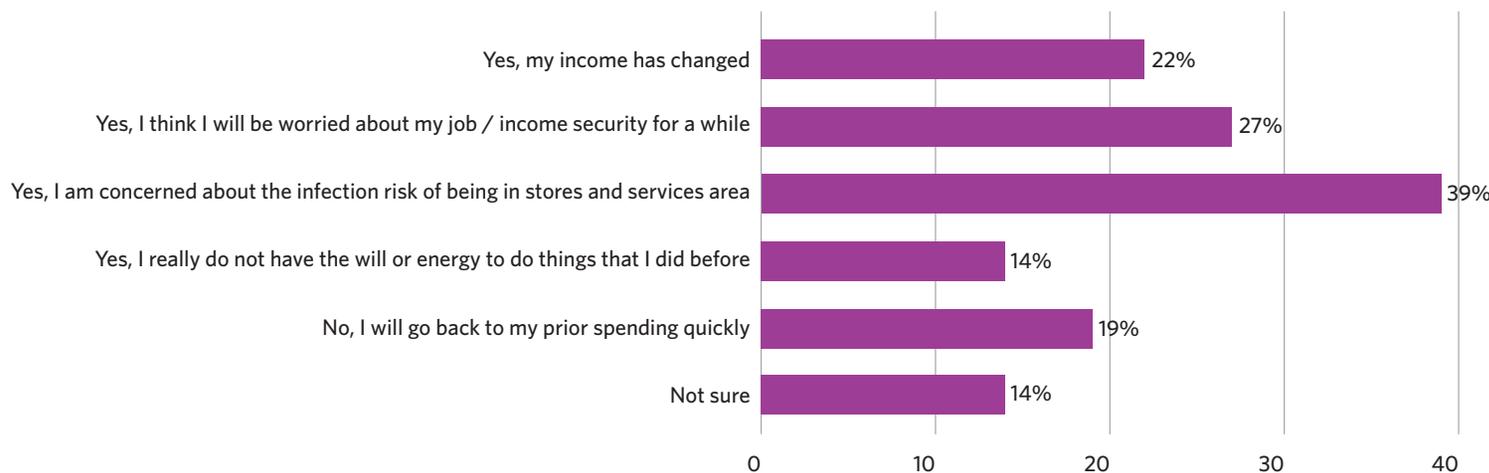


With a mix of social distancing, self-isolation, and the closure of some businesses, the data also shows that there is likely to be a change in spending habits after the pandemic. Only nineteen per cent of respondents are likely to return to their previous spending habits. The main barrier given for not returning to previous spending habits is a concern about infection risk of being in stores and service areas (39 per cent). The second most common barrier is a worry about job/income security (27 per cent), followed by a change in income (22 per cent).

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 Canada. 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 confidant or a counselling 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.

