

The Mental Health Index™ report

Canada, August 2020



MORNEAU
SHEPELL 



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Executive summary

As Canadians from coast-to-coast headed into midsummer, managing daily lives in a time of global pandemic, thoughts moved from “when will we return to normal” to what will the “new normal” look like. While daily case counts of COVID-19 remained among the lowest levels since March with isolated outbreaks among key segments of the population: young adults ranging from 20 to 29 years of age represented the highest proportion of new cases in Canada (41% where data was available) at the beginning of August.¹ Canadians, especially young people, appear to be suffering from “COVID-19 fatigue” as stories of large gatherings of young people enjoying the Canadian summer grab the headlines. Mask wearing is now mandatory in many jurisdictions and public places.

Quebec followed by Ontario and Alberta continue to report the highest average number of daily and weekly COVID-19 cases, while there are increases in the number of new cases per day being observed in British Columbia².

As case counts remain relatively low, many COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted across the country. For example, all sectors of the Quebec economy are now fully reopened except for vacation camps with overnight accommodation.³ Significant restrictions are in place for bars, which have been a source of isolated outbreaks in the province. Heading into August, Ontario (except Windsor-Essex which was a hub of COVID-19 cases in the agricultural sector) had moved into the final stage of reopening.

1 <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/en-surv-covid19-weekly-epi-update-20200807.pdf>

2 <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/en-surv-covid19-weekly-epi-update-20200807.pdf>

3 <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/reopening-maintaining-economic-activities-covid-19/>



Across Canada, the dialogue on safely reopening schools is front and centre. Decision-makers, public health officials and educators are focused on strategies to get children back to school this autumn. Despite a range of measures, including self-screening, mandatory masks, physical distancing, cohorts and online learning, many parents and kids are anxious about the risks of COVID-19 exposure and transmission associated with the return to the classroom.⁴ The Canada-U.S. border remains closed as Canadians observe the ongoing rise in COVID-19 cases in the United States.

For the fifth consecutive month, the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to have an impact on the mental health of Canadians, with a decline this month, reversing the trend toward modest improvement since April.

Mental Health Index™

The overall Mental Health Index™ for August 2020 is -11 points. 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. An 11-point decrease from the pre-COVID-19 benchmark⁵ reflects a population whose mental health is similar to the most distressed one per cent of the benchmark population.

The lowest Mental Health Index™ sub-score is for the risk measure of anxiety (-12.9), followed by depression (-12.7), optimism (-12.7), isolation (-12.1), and work productivity (-11.1). The risk measure with the highest mental health score is financial (3.5), followed by general psychological health (-2.4). However, the latter has declined when compared with the prior month (-0.9).

- After a period of slow but steady improvement, the Mental Health Index™ score declined in Canada in August.
- All but two of the Mental Health Index™ sub-scores have worsened when compared to the prior month. Financial risk has improved from 2.9 in July to 3.5 in August and work productivity has remained the same as the prior month at -11.1.

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

4 <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-as-back-to-school-anxiety-mounts-canadian-parents-turn-to-private/>

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



- The financial score continues its improvement since May with a score of 3.5 points and is above the pre-2020 benchmark. This indicates that Canadians are saving more than they did before the pandemic, and are increasing their saving month over month since the pandemic.
- Individuals without emergency savings continue to experience a lower score in mental health (-24.5) than the overall group. Those reporting an emergency fund have an average mental health score of -6.1.
- Females (-13.3) continue to have a lower mental health score than males (-9.0); and as observed in prior months, mental health scores improve with age.
- Respondents identifying as Indigenous/Aboriginal have the lowest mental health score (-20.8), followed by those identifying as Black (-19.4), and those identifying as South Asian (-17.2).
- Individuals identifying as White have the highest mental health score (-10.0), followed by respondents identifying as Latin, South or Central American (-10.5), and those identifying as East Asian (-11.7).
- In April, there was 5.0 point variance in the mental health score between those with and without children, with a lower score for those with children. In May and June the gap continued but narrowed. In July the variance increased and exceeded April. The variance is observed again in August, with a mental health score for those with one child, 5.3 points lower than those with none.

From April to July, provincial Mental Health Index™ scores have shown general improvement; however, declines are observed in all but three provinces in August

From April to July, provincial Mental Health Index™ scores have shown general improvement; however, several provinces are showing declines from July to August.

- From July to August, the largest declines in mental health scores are observed in Quebec (-1.7 points), followed by British Columbia (-1.0 points), and the Maritimes (-0.9 points).
- Declines in mental health were also observed in Ontario (-10.3 to -10.9) and in Saskatchewan (-9.1 to -9.9) when compared to the prior month.
- From July to August, the greatest improvements in mental health scores are observed in Newfoundland and Labrador (1.4 points), followed by Manitoba (1.4 points).
- Alberta showed negligible improvement in mental health from 13.4 in July to 13.3 in August.

Overall, 8 per cent of respondents are unemployed. While most individuals remain employed, 20 per cent report reduced hours or reduced salary since April 2020.



- Individuals reporting reduced hours when compared to the prior month have the lowest mental health score (-16.8), followed by individuals reporting reduced salary when compared to the prior month (-16.4), and those not currently employed (-16.2).
- Individuals reporting as self-employed/sole proprietor have the highest mental health score (-7.9), followed by individuals working for companies with between 5,001-10,000 employees (-9.3).
- Respondents who report working for companies with 501-1,000 employees have the lowest mental health score (-14.2).

The highest mental health scores in August are observed among individuals employed in the Automotive Industry (-5.1), followed by Real Estate, Rental and Leasing (-8.2), and Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction (-8.7) industries.

- For the third consecutive month, full-time students have the lowest average mental health score (-28.5). This continues to be significantly lower than the next lowest score, among individuals in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (-16.5), and Information and Cultural Industries (-15.1).
- Individuals employed in Accommodation and Food Services, Automotive Industry, and Management of Companies and Enterprises have seen the greatest improvement in mental health since last month.

For the fifth 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 August 2020 is 57.7. This indicates that 24 per cent of the population is experiencing more mental stress compared to the prior month, with 9 per cent experiencing less. This is the fifth consecutive month 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 Alberta (60.6), followed by Ontario (58.0), British Columbia (57.8), and Saskatchewan (57.4). Respondents living in the provinces where the increase in mental stress is lower still have significant increases. They include the Maritimes (56.2), followed by Quebec (56.0), Manitoba (55.6), and Newfoundland (51.0).

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



- The greatest increase in mental stress is seen in employed people with reduced salary (69.4), followed by unemployed people (63.3) when compared to employed people with reduced hours (61.0) and employed people with no change to salary or hours (55.6).
- As was reported in prior months, and as evidenced again in August, younger respondents are experiencing a greater increase in mental stress when compared to older respondents.
- Further, since April 2020, females have larger increases in mental stress when compared with males.
- Respondents identifying as Black have the least favourable mental stress change scores (62.0), followed by those identifying as Indigenous/Aboriginal (60.8), and those identifying as Arab/Middle Eastern/West Asian (60.7).
- Individuals identifying as Mixed (Other) have the most favourable mental stress change scores (48.8), followed by respondents identifying as Latin, South or Central American (54.8).

Mental Stress Change scores for the Automotive Industry, Construction, and Real Estate, Rental and Leasing industries are less steep compared to the prior month.

- For the second consecutive month, full-time students have the most significant increase in the Mental Stress Change score (71.9). This is followed by individuals employed in Information and Cultural Industries (64.0), and Accommodation and Food Services (62.4).

Additional findings

The impact of the ongoing pandemic on mental health

In June, individuals were asked to report the main emotion they were experiencing most often. The same question was repeated in August and similar to the June findings, worry (25 per cent), calm (19 per cent), and frustration (19 per cent) are the most commonly reported emotions.

- Consistent with the June findings, individuals reporting positive emotions (i.e. calm, happiness, hopefulness, or gratitude) have much higher Mental Health Index™ scores than individuals reporting negative emotions (i.e. anger, disbelief, frustration, helplessness, and worry).
- In August, 55 per cent note negative emotions. The proportions are largely the same as in June, with the exception of a 3 per cent decrease in those indicating shock/disbelief.

For the second consecutive month, full-time students have the lowest mental health score and the most significant increase in the Mental Stress Change



- This further validates the suggestion from June that an individual’s personal outlook contributes significantly to how well that individual is coping with the strain of the pandemic and that this effect is reflected in the Mental Health Index™ scores.

Using text analysis when respondents were asked to explain their emotion, certain frequently occurring words appearing in the responses were selected and the average mental health score of individuals using each word was determined.

- Individuals using words and ideas such as health, happiness, gratefulness have an average mental health score above the pre-pandemic benchmark.
- Individuals using words and ideas such as stress, COVID, work, future, or uncertainty have significantly lower mental health scores than the pre-pandemic benchmark.
- Those using the word uncertainty have the lowest mental health score.

Likelihood of a return to the pre-pandemic state

- Fifty per cent of respondents feel that it is unlikely that things will return to the pre-pandemic state, with 24 per cent undecided.
- The mental health score for individuals feeling that it is very unlikely that things will return to the pre-pandemic state is the lowest (-19.6).
- An increasing trend in mental health scores is observed from very unlikely (-19.6) to very likely (-3.9).

Top of mind issues

- The most commonly reported top of mind issue is the ongoing impact of the pandemic related to finances and the economy (49 per cent). This is followed by the ongoing impact of the pandemic not related to finances and the economy (25 per cent), change of plans for major life event (9 per cent), other (9 per cent), the upcoming US election (4 per cent), and anti-racism (4 per cent).
- The lowest mental health score is among individuals reporting that their top of mind issue is a change of plans for a major life event (-13.8).
- The mental health score for individuals reporting that their top of mind issue is the upcoming US election is considerably higher (-3.6) than the mental health scores of individuals reporting any of the other issues.

Nearly half of respondents indicated that their top of mind issue is the ongoing impact of the pandemic related to finances and the economy



- Individuals that selected 'Other' as a top of mind issue were prompted to input a text response. Text analysis revealed that the most commonly reported other issues relate to COVID-19, health, work, family, climate change, retirement and travel.

Adaptation

Respondents were asked to report how well they feel that they are adapting financially, to changes to their work life, and to changes to their personal life. The results suggest that where there is difficulty adapting, it is more likely to be in one's personal life than either work or finances.

- Thirty-four per cent of respondents are undecided or feel that they are adapting poorly to changes in their personal life or personal routine, and their mental health score is lower than other groups (-25.5) and significantly lower than the average (-11).
- Thirty per cent of respondents are undecided or feel that they are adapting poorly to changes in their work life or work routine, and their mental health score is -24.4.
- Thirty per cent of respondents are undecided or feel that they are adapting poorly to changes in their finances, and their mental health score is -25.2.
- Seventy per cent of respondents feel that they are adapting well to changes in their finances, and these individuals have mental health scores averaging -5.1.
- Seventy per cent of respondents feel that they are adapting well to changes in their work life or work routine, and these individuals have mental health scores averaging -5.5.
- Sixty-six per cent of respondents feel that they are adapting well to changes in their personal life or personal routine, and these individuals have mental health scores averaging -3.9.

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

Individuals who report adapting poorly to changes in their personal life have a mental health score twenty-two points below individuals who report adapting well to change in this area



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.

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 remove sampling bias. 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. Data for the current report was collected between July 21 to July 31, 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 $(\text{percentage reporting less mental stress} + \text{percentage reporting the same level of mental stress} * 0.5) * -1 + 100$. 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.

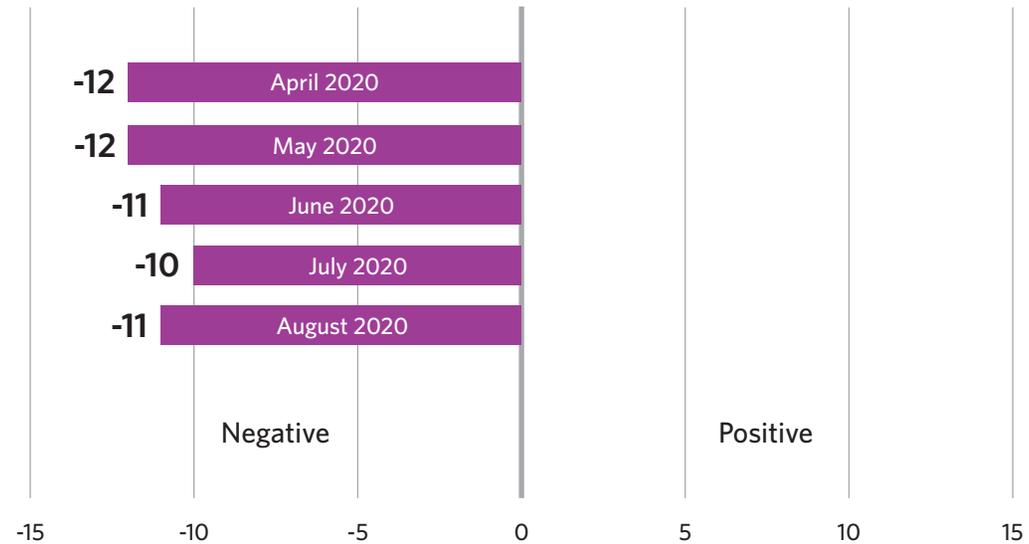


The Mental Health Index™

The Mental Health Index™ (MHI) is a measure of deviation from the benchmark⁶ of mental health and risk.

MHI

Current month August 2020	-11	
July 2020	-10	
MHI sub-scores⁷	August	July
Anxiety	-12.9	-12.3
Depression	-12.7	-12.4
Optimism	-12.7	-11.4
Isolation	-12.1	-11.0
Work productivity	-11.1	-11.1
Psychological health	-2.4	-0.9
Financial risk	3.5	2.9



The overall Mental Health Index™ is -11 and continues to reside below the benchmark for the fifth consecutive month. The current score of 64 is equivalent to the first percentile of the benchmark.

⁶ The benchmark reflects data collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019.
⁷ The demographic breakdown of sub-scores are available upon request.



Employment status	August	July
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	-9.0	-7.6
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	-16.8	-16.2
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	-16.4	-19.1
Not currently employed	-16.2	-16.0
Age group	August	July
Age 20-29	-22.5	-20.8
Age 30-39	-16.0	-15.9
Age 40-49	-11.5	-11.1
Age 50-59	-8.1	-7.0
Age 60-69	-4.2	-4.3
Number of children	August	July
No children in household	-9.9	-9.2
1 child	-15.2	-13.2
2 children	-13.0	-13.8
3 children or more	-8.6	-8.9

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

Province	August	July
Alberta	-13.3	-13.4
British Columbia	-11.5	-10.5
Manitoba	-9.2	-10.6
Newfoundland and Labrador	-2.6	-4.0
The Maritimes	-10.7	-9.8
Quebec	-11.3	-9.6
Ontario	-10.9	-10.3
Saskatchewan	-9.9	-9.1
Gender	August	July
Male	-9.0	-8.8
Female	-13.3	-11.9
Income	August	July
Household income <\$30K/annum	-21.6	-19.4
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	-14.3	-13.8
\$60K to <\$100K	-11.8	-11.3
\$100K to <\$150K	-8.7	-7.5
\$150K or more	-4.2	-3.8

Racial identification	August	July
Arab/Middle Eastern/ West Asian	-14.7	-14.2
Black	-19.4	-17.7
East Asian	-11.7	-12.3
Indigenous/Aboriginal	-20.8	-9.1
Latin, South or Central American	-10.5	-15.0
South Asian	-17.2	-17.3
South East Asian	-14.4	-14.6
White	-10.0	-9.2
Mixed (Other)	-13.1	-11.3
Prefer not to answer	-13.3	-6.6
Other*	-13.2	-16.7
Employer size	August	July
Self-employed/sole proprietor	-7.9	-5.5
2-50 employees	-10.6	-10.4
51-100 employees	-13.4	-14.3
101-500 employees	-12.5	-11.4
501-1,000 employees	-14.2	-11.6
1,001-5,000 employees	-9.9	-10.0
5,001-10,000 employees	-9.3	-7.6
More than 10,000 employees	-10.2	-9.4

* Included in this category are Pacific Islander and Mixed (Black and other) as the minimum threshold for reporting was not met for each group.



The Mental Health Index™ (industry)

The mental health of individuals across industries can differ immensely depending upon market and society conditions. The highest mental health scores are observed among individuals in the Automotive Industry (-5.1), Real Estate, Rental and Leasing (-8.2), and Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction (-8.7). Full-time students (-28.5) have the lowest mental health score followed by individuals in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (-16.5), and Information and Cultural Industries (-15.1). Improvements from the prior month are shown in the table below:

Industry	August 2020 MHI	July 2020 MHI	Improvement
Accommodation and Food Services	-14.5	-19.1	4.6
Automotive Industry	-5.1	-7.3	2.2
Management of Companies and Enterprises	-11.6	-13.8	2.2
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	-14.6	-16.2	1.6
Utilities	-9.7	-10.9	1.2
Retail Trade	-10.0	-10.6	0.7
Transportation and Warehousing	-10.5	-10.8	0.3
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	-16.5	-16.5	0.0
Manufacturing	-8.8	-8.6	-0.2
Educational Services	-11.6	-11.1	-0.5
Finance and Insurance	-11.3	-10.7	-0.7
Other services (except Public Administration)	-9.4	-8.7	-0.7
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	-10.2	-9.5	-0.7
Health Care and Social Assistance	-11.8	-10.5	-1.3
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	-8.2	-6.3	-1.9
Other	-11.4	-9.1	-2.3
Public Administration	-11.6	-9.1	-2.5
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	-8.7	-6.1	-2.6
Construction	-10.5	-7.2	-3.3
Information and Cultural Industries	-15.1	-11.9	-3.3
Wholesale Trade	-12.3	-8.0	-4.3
Full-time student	-28.5	-23.7	-4.8

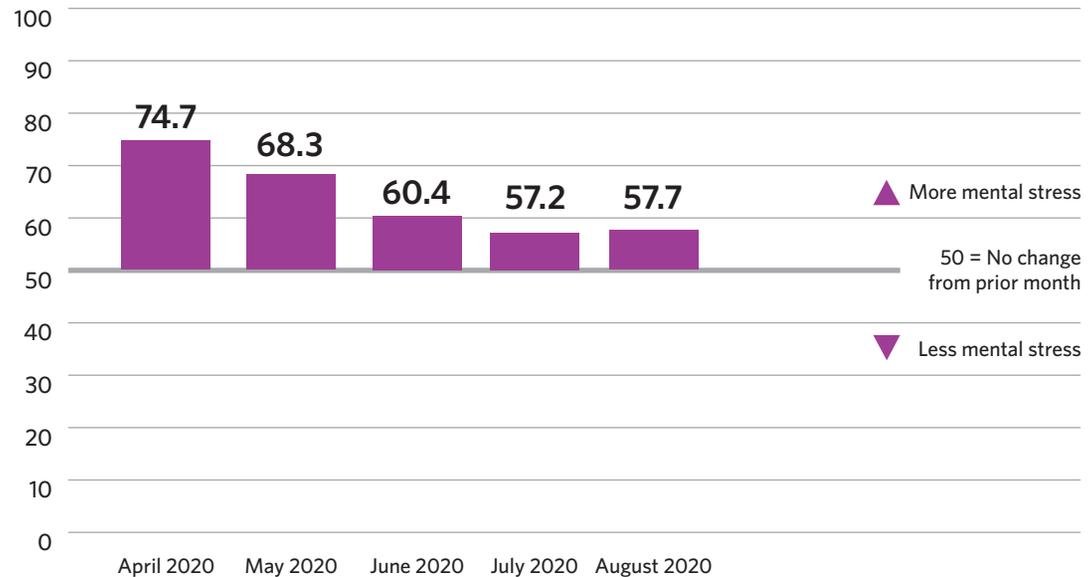


The Mental Stress Change score

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 August 2020	57.7
July 2020	57.2

The Mental Stress Change score for August 2020 is 57.7. This reflects an increase in mental stress when compared to the prior month. The steepness of the increase had been declining month-over-month since April; however, has increased modestly in August. The current score indicates that 24 per cent of the population is experiencing more mental stress compared to the prior month, with 9 per cent experiencing less. A continued increase in mental stress over the last five months, when compared to the benchmark, indicates a significant accumulation of strain in the population.

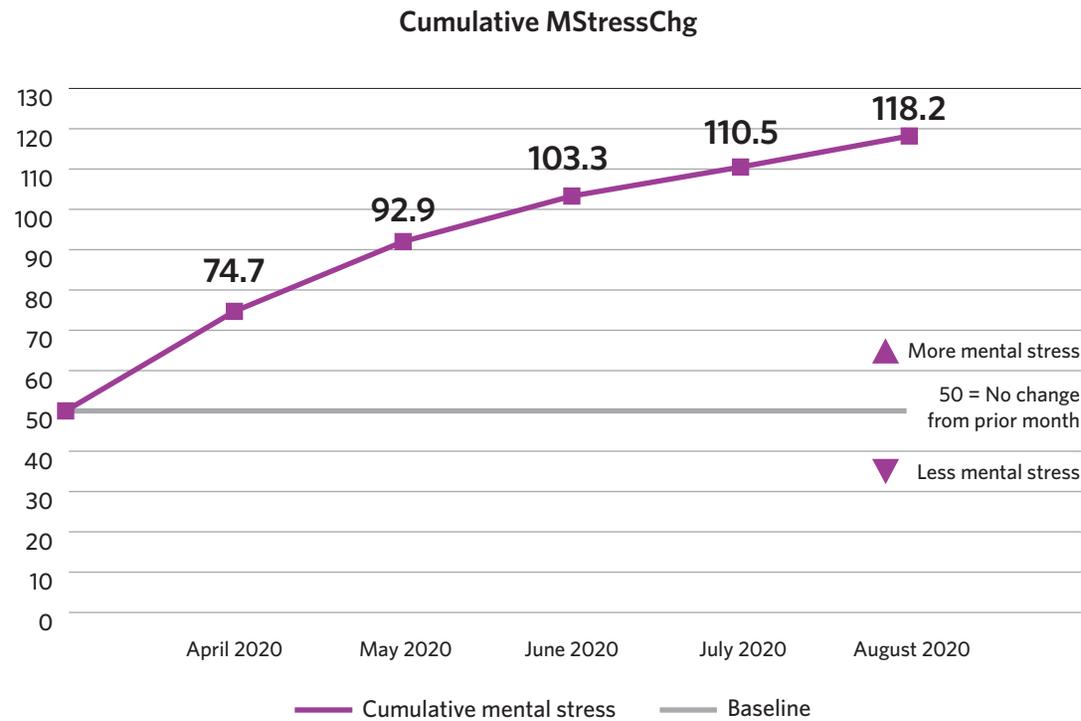




The Mental Stress Change (cumulative)

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 implying 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	August	July
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	55.6	54.7
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	61.0	63.3
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	69.4	66.0
Not currently employed	63.3	59.3

Age group	August	July
Age 20-29	63.8	61.3
Age 30-39	60.8	60.5
Age 40-49	57.2	58.4
Age 50-59	55.6	55.5
Age 60-69	55.4	53.1

Number of children	August	July
No children in household	56.8	56.0
1 child	59.0	58.7
2 children	61.3	60.7
3 children or more	58.9	63.3

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

Province	August	July
Alberta	60.6	58.9
British Columbia	57.8	57.1
Manitoba	55.6	57.3
Newfoundland and Labrador	51.0	51.1
The Maritimes	56.2	54.6
Quebec	56.0	53.9
Ontario	58.0	59.0
Saskatchewan	57.4	55.3

Gender	August	July
Male	56.5	57.1
Female	58.9	57.1

Income	August	July
Household income <\$30K/annum	61.3	58.6
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	56.4	58.3
\$60K to <\$100K	59.4	57.5
\$100K to <\$150K	57.2	57.6
\$150K or more	54.9	54.8

Racial identification	August	July
Arab/Middle Eastern/ West Asian	60.7	54.5
Black	62.0	57.2
East Asian	57.7	62.1
Indigenous/Aboriginal	60.8	52.6
Latin, South or Central American	54.8	67.9
South Asian	57.5	61.8
South East Asian	58.0	61.3
White	57.7	56.1
Mixed (Other)	48.8	51.5
Prefer not to answer	54.8	57.4
Other*	61.1	54.5

* Included in this category are Pacific Islander and Mixed (Black and other) as the minimum threshold for reporting was not met for each group.

Employer size	August	July
Self-employed/sole proprietor	54.5	54.8
2-50 employees	56.9	55.6
51-100 employees	58.8	57.3
101-500 employees	59.5	57.9
501-1,000 employees	62.1	62.4
1,001-5,000 employees	56.9	58.0
5,001-10,000 employees	57.8	55.1
More than 10,000 employees	56.6	56.0



The Mental Stress Change (industry)

The mental health of individuals across industries can differ immensely depending upon market and societal conditions. The most favourable mental stress changes are observed in the Automotive Industry (48.2), Construction (54.3), and Real Estate, Rental and Leasing (54.5) industries. The least favourable mental stress changes are found among full-time students (71.9), Information and Cultural Industries (64.0), and Accommodation and Food Services (62.4).

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

Industry	August 2020 MStress Chg	July 2020 MStress Chg
Automotive Industry	48.2	52.9
Construction	54.3	57.2
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	54.5	59.8
Other services (except Public Administration)	55.4	52.9
Utilities	55.7	54.4
Educational Services	56.0	57.8
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	56.3	49.0
Manufacturing	56.5	55.8
Finance and Insurance	56.6	58.1
Public Administration	56.7	55.1
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	57.1	64.9
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	57.1	61.8
Retail Trade	57.2	53.7
Transportation and Warehousing	57.8	54.3
Other	58.0	51.8
Management of Companies and Enterprises	58.3	61.7
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	59.6	61.0
Wholesale Trade	60.1	58.1
Health Care and Social Assistance	60.6	60.0
Accommodation and Food Services	62.4	64.9
Information and Cultural Industries	64.0	59.2
Full-time student	71.9	63.6

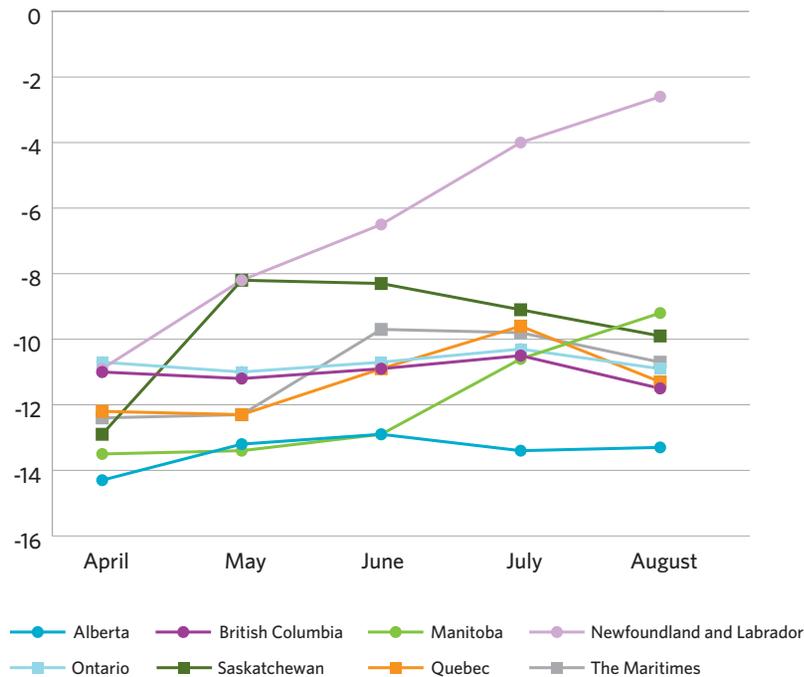


Mental health trends by region

The effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continue to be felt across the country to varying extent. Provincial mental health scores since April have shown general improvement until July; however, several regions are showing declines from July to August. Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as Manitoba, are continuing to see improvements in mental health, while other provinces are showing similar scores to last month or declines in mental health.

From July to August, the largest declines in mental health scores are observed in Quebec (-1.7), followed by British Columbia (-1.0), and The Maritimes (-0.9). The greatest improvements in mental health scores are observed in Newfoundland and Labrador (1.4), followed by Manitoba (1.4).

Canadian Province Mental Health Index™ scores



July to August change



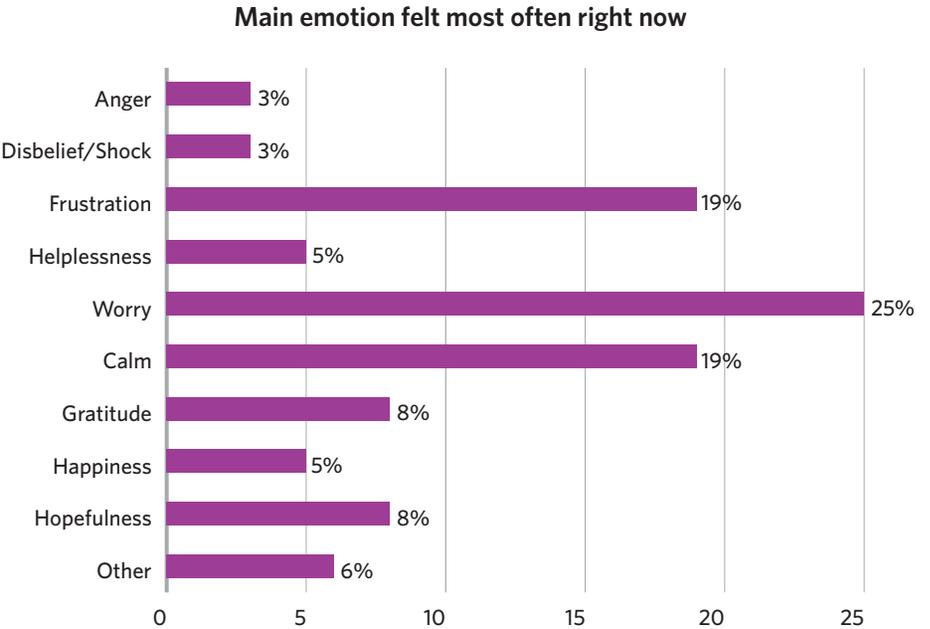


The impact of the ongoing pandemic on mental health

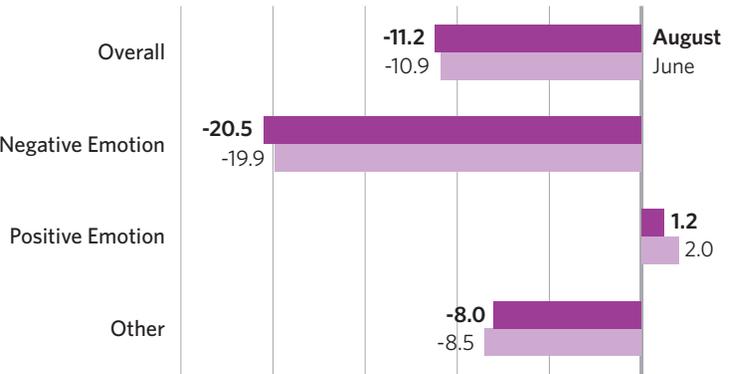
Main emotion being felt most often right now

In June, individuals were asked to report the main emotion they were experiencing most often. The same question was repeated in August and similar to the June findings, worry (25 per cent), calm (19 per cent), and frustration (19 per cent) are the most commonly reported emotions. In August, 55 per cent note negative emotions. The proportions are largely the same as in June, with the exception of a 3 per cent decrease in those indicating shock/disbelief.

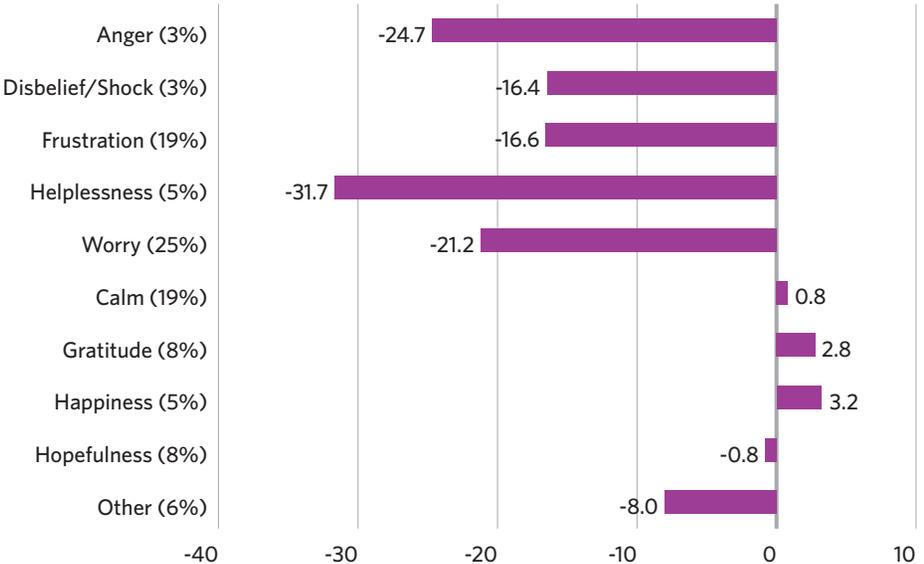
Consistent with the June findings, individuals reporting positive emotions (i.e. calm, happiness, hopefulness, or gratitude) have much higher Mental Health Index™ scores than individuals reporting negative emotions (i.e. anger, disbelief, frustration, helplessness, and worry). When comparing the overall positive and negative emotions from June and August, similar Mental Health Index™ scores are observed.



Comparison of emotion type and MHI score from June to August



Main emotion felt most often right now and MHI score

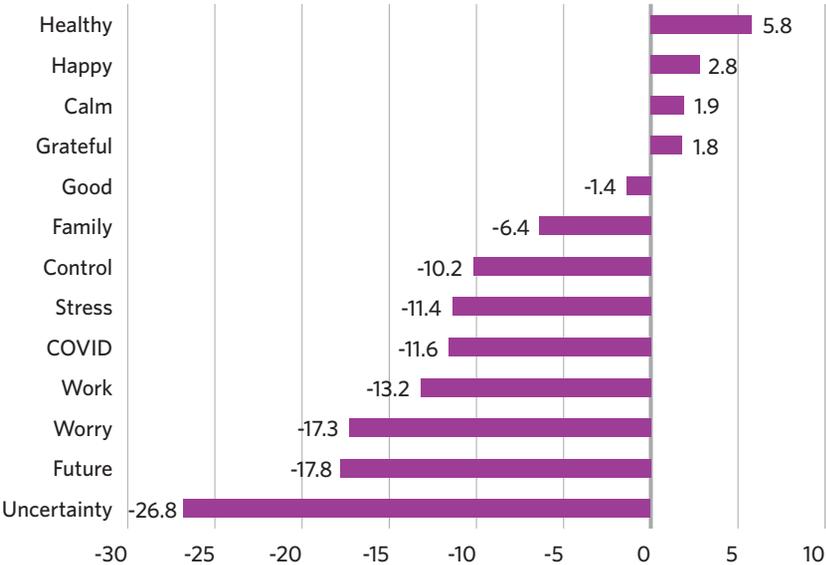




In August, a follow-up question was included asking respondents to express the reason for selecting the main emotion they reported feeling. Using text analysis, certain frequently occurring words appearing in the responses were selected and the average mental health score of individuals using each word was determined.

Individuals using words and ideas such as health, happiness, gratefulness have an average mental health score above the pre-pandemic benchmark. Individuals using words and ideas such as stress, COVID, work, future, or uncertainty have significantly lower mental health scores than the pre-pandemic benchmark. Those using the word uncertainty have the lowest mental health score.

Word usage and Mental Health Index™ scores



“I have not worked in 4 months and no sign of going back to my job yet. My job is at risk.”

“The uncertainty of how we will continue living, financially and emotionally.”

“We are so advantaged in comparison to the suffering and angst experienced by so many.”

“I don’t know what to do, where to start, or how to do anything to move forward. I feel stuck.”

“I just feel like I cannot control anything.”

“I am unable to see past this to what will be next, constant worry of getting sick, anxiety.”

“Things can get worse, we don’t know, but grateful for the things we have.”

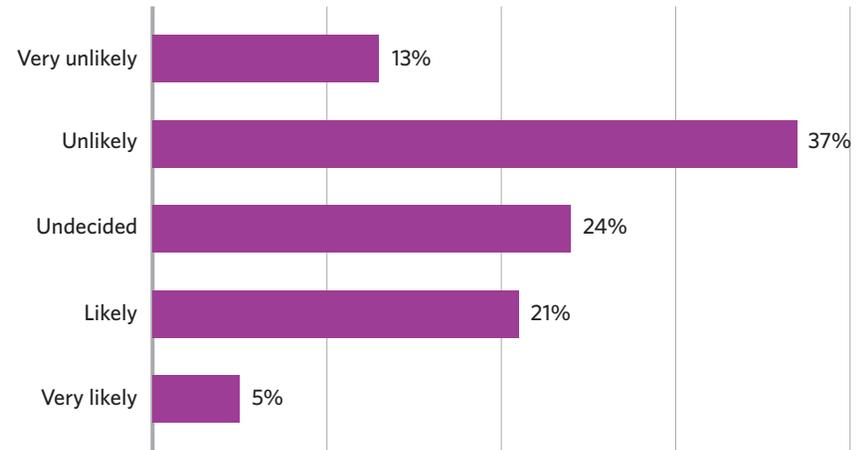


Likelihood of a return to the pre-pandemic state

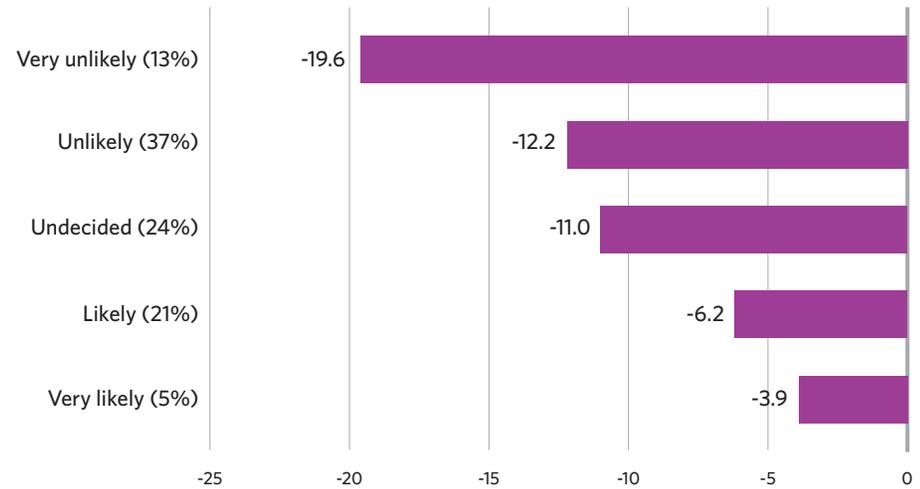
Individuals were asked how likely it is that things will return to the pre-pandemic state. Fifty per cent of respondents feel it is unlikely that things will return to the pre-pandemic state, with 24 per cent undecided.

The mental health score for individuals feeling that it is very unlikely that things will return to the pre-pandemic state is the lowest (-19.6). An increasing trend in mental health scores is observed from very unlikely (-19.6) to very likely (-3.9).

Likelihood of return to pre-pandemic state



Likelihood of return to pre-pandemic state: MHI scores





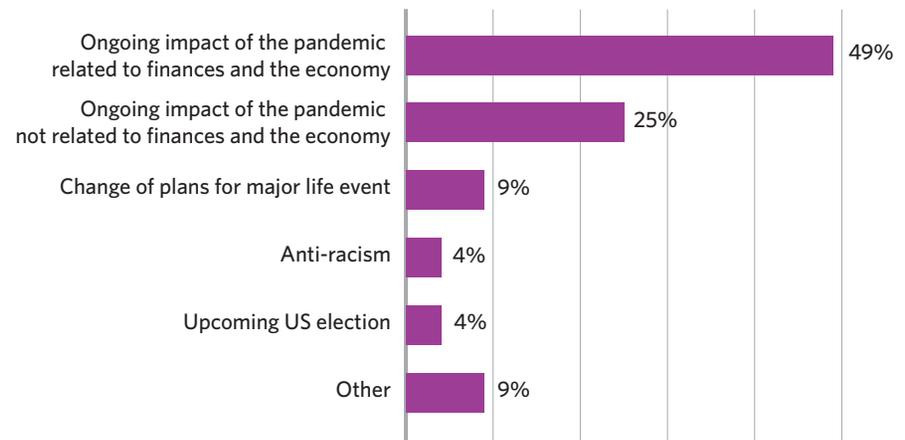
Top of mind issues

The most commonly reported top of mind issue is the ongoing impact of the pandemic related to finances and the economy (49 per cent). This is followed by the ongoing impact of the pandemic not related to finances and the economy (25 per cent), change of plans for major life event (9 per cent), other (9 per cent), the upcoming US election (4 per cent), and anti-racism (4 per cent).

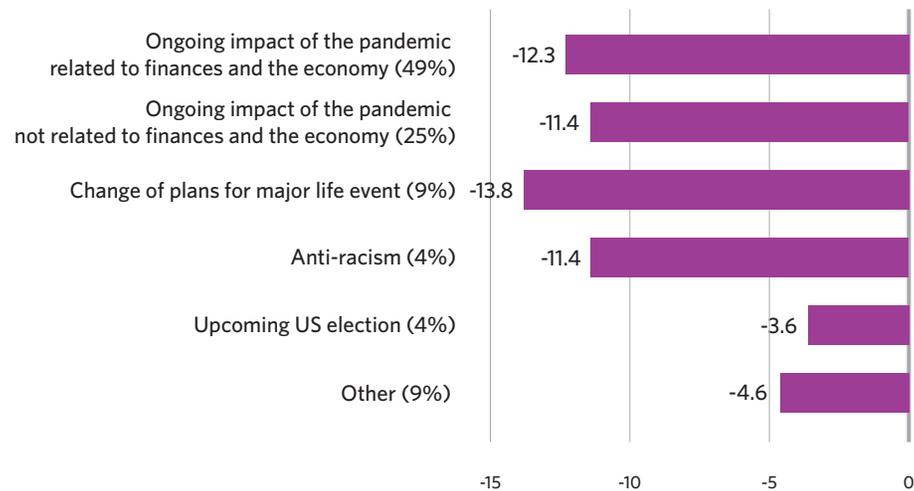
The lowest mental health score is among individuals reporting that their top of mind issue is a change of plans for a major life event (-13.8).

The mental health score for individuals reporting that their top of mind issue is the upcoming US election is considerably higher (-3.6) than the mental health scores of individuals reporting any of the other issues.

Top of Mind Issues

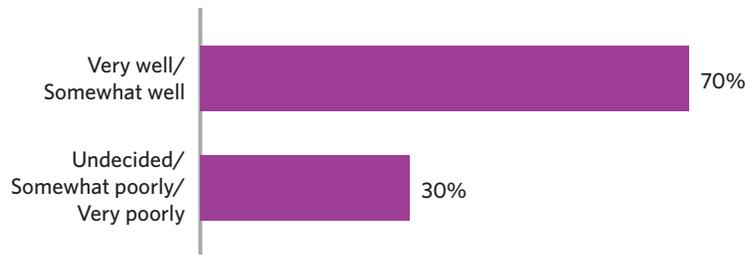


Top of Mind Issues: MHI scores

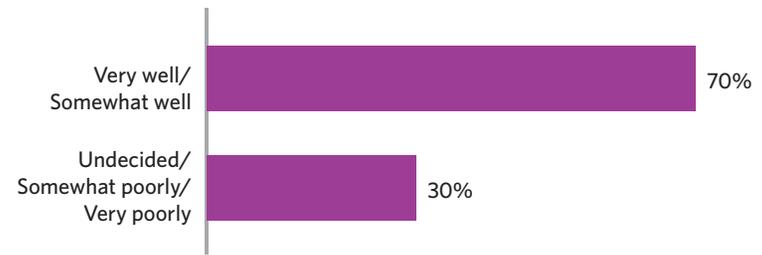




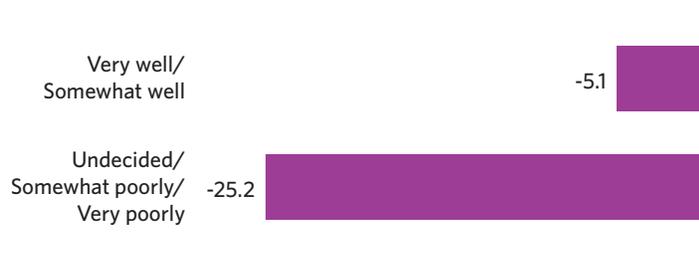
Financial adaptation



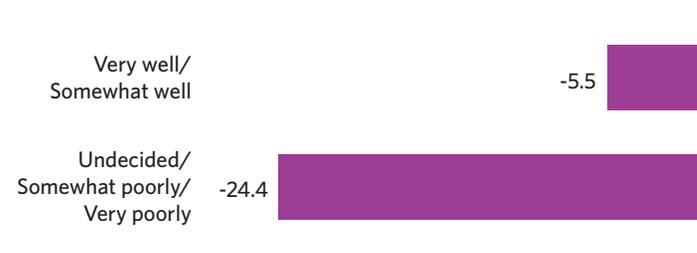
Change to my work life/routine adaptation



Financial adaptation: MHI scores



Change to my work life/routine adaptation: MHI scores



Adaptation

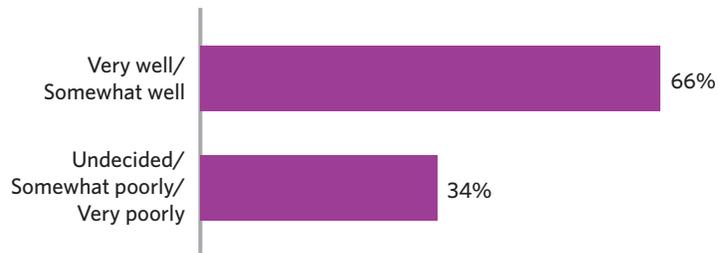
Respondents were asked to report how well they feel that they are adapting financially to changes to their work life and to changes to their personal life.

Seventy per cent of respondents feel that they are adapting well to changes in their finances and these individuals have mental health scores averaging -5.1; whereas thirty per cent of respondents who are undecided or feel that they are adapting poorly to changes in their finances, have a significantly lower mental health score of -25.2.

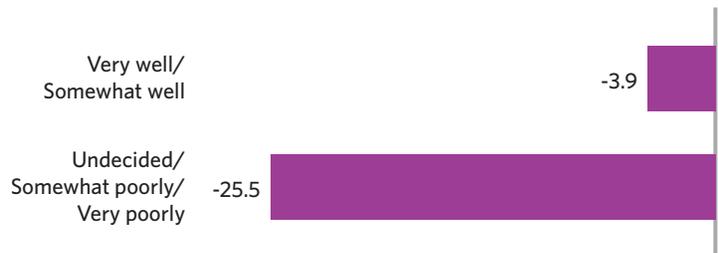
Seventy per cent of respondents feel that they are adapting well to changes in their work life or work routine and these individuals have mental health scores averaging -5.5; whereas thirty per cent of respondents who are undecided or feel that they are adapting poorly to changes in their work life or work routine, have a significantly lower mental health score of -24.4.



Change to my personal life/routine adaptation



Change to my personal life/routine adaptation: MHI scores



Sixty-six per cent of respondents feel that they are adapting well to changes in their personal life or personal routine and these individuals have mental health scores averaging -3.9. Thirty-four per cent of respondents are undecided or feel that they are adapting poorly to changes in their personal life or personal routine and their mental health score is significantly lower at -25.5.



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 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.

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