

# The Mental Health Index™ report

The United States, January 2021



**LifeWorks**  
by Morneau Shepell





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## January highlights

**As Americans head into 2021, COVID-19 restrictions remain in place in most parts of the country. The ongoing impact of the pandemic continues to have a negative effect on the mental health of Americans, with January marking ten consecutive months of diminished mental health when compared to before the pandemic.**

After the initial significant decline measured in April 2020, there were modest increases from April to July 2020. A reversal of this trend occurred in August and September, followed by a modest improvement in October, and declines in November and December, dropping to its lowest point, equal to April 2020. The mental health score in January rose modestly to -7.6 and reflects a **working population in January 2021 as distressed as the most distressed seven percent of working Americans, prior to 2020.**

The proportion of individuals reporting more stress than the prior month (23 percent) is slightly lower than the prior month, while the proportion of individuals reporting less mental stress is only 9 percent. The majority (68 percent) indicate the same level of stress when compared to the prior month, however, given the escalation in stress each month since the pandemic, this reflects an elevated level of cumulative stress for this group as well. With recent increases in cases in many regions of the country, and the resulting restrictions, this strain will likely continue.

**Since August, the financial risk score has declined** to its lowest point in December (5.1). In January 2021, the score remains nearly equal (5.2) to its December low.

**The Mental Health Index™ score for managers (-8.4) is lower than for non-managers (-6.4).**

Regional mental health scores since April had shown general improvement until July; however, since July, all regions had shown a declining trend to December. In January, modest improvements are observed in all regions.

**For the tenth consecutive month, full-time students have the lowest mental health score (-22.5)** when compared to individuals across all industry sectors. Further, **students have the most significant increase in mental stress (62.7).**

A positive score on the Mental Health Index™ indicates better mental health in the overall working population, compared to the benchmark period of 2017 to 2019. A higher positive score reflects greater improvement. A negative Mental Health Index™ score indicates a decline in mental health compared to the benchmark period. The more negative the score, the greater the decline. A score of zero indicates mental health that is the same as it was in the benchmark period.

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Almost one in ten (9 per cent) of respondents have steady employment and supplement their income with “gigs”; this group has a significantly lower mental health score (-18.8) than even full (-16.3) or part-time gig workers (-11.4).

Previous findings in June and August 2020 indicate that the most commonly reported emotions that individuals were experiencing were worry, calm and frustration. Nearly one year into the pandemic, the most commonly reported emotions continue to be calm (21 percent), worry (17 percent) and frustration (17 percent) and their proportions are similar as observed in prior months. **Women are fifty percent more likely to report worry as their primary emotion and fifty percent less likely to report calm when compared to men. Those who report gratitude have the strongest mental health.**

As Americans continue to manage their daily lives in a time of global pandemic, thoughts of temporary adjustments are moving to what the “new normal” could look like. Many Americans are rethinking their priorities amid the ongoing impact of the pandemic on work, finances, social relationships, physical and mental health. The most commonly reported areas respondents would like to focus on are family (57 percent), physical health (48 percent), having fun/enjoying life (44 percent), and financial security (40 percent). **Nearly thirty percent (28 percent) of individuals report wanting to focus on their mental health. Individuals between the ages of 20 and 29 are nearly twice as likely to report wanting to focus on their mental health when compared to those over the age of 60.**

The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic has touched Americans in different ways – restricted social lives, the shift to virtual work, illness, or death of loved ones, etc. At the same time, some Americans are reporting inspired changes or unseen benefits because of the pandemic. **The most commonly reported area of positive impact is personal relationships (18 percent), followed by financial security (10 percent), and job/career (9 percent).** Respondents reporting a positive change in their social lives have the highest mental health score (-2.6).

As expected, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult on most Americans. The most commonly reported area of negative change is social life (21 percent), followed by financial security (14 percent), and mental health (12 percent). The lowest mental health score is observed among individuals reporting that the most significant negative impact is to their mental health (-21.3), followed by those reporting a negative change to their financial security



(-17.2), and those reporting a negative impact on their job/career (-15.0). **Individuals under the age of 40 are more than twice as likely to report the most significant negative impact on mental health when compared to individuals over 60 years old.**

As Americans focus on managing through the pandemic, employment remains a critical stabilizer. **Finances and isolation continue to be the strongest drivers of mental health** and stable employment is central to offsetting the risk of poor mental health. Nearly sixty percent of respondents have no change in their hours or salary, whereas sixteen percent report working fewer hours, and eight percent report reduced pay/salary. Individuals reporting reduced pay/salary during the pandemic have a mental health score nearly nine points below the national average; those working fewer hours have a mental health score nearly six points below the average.

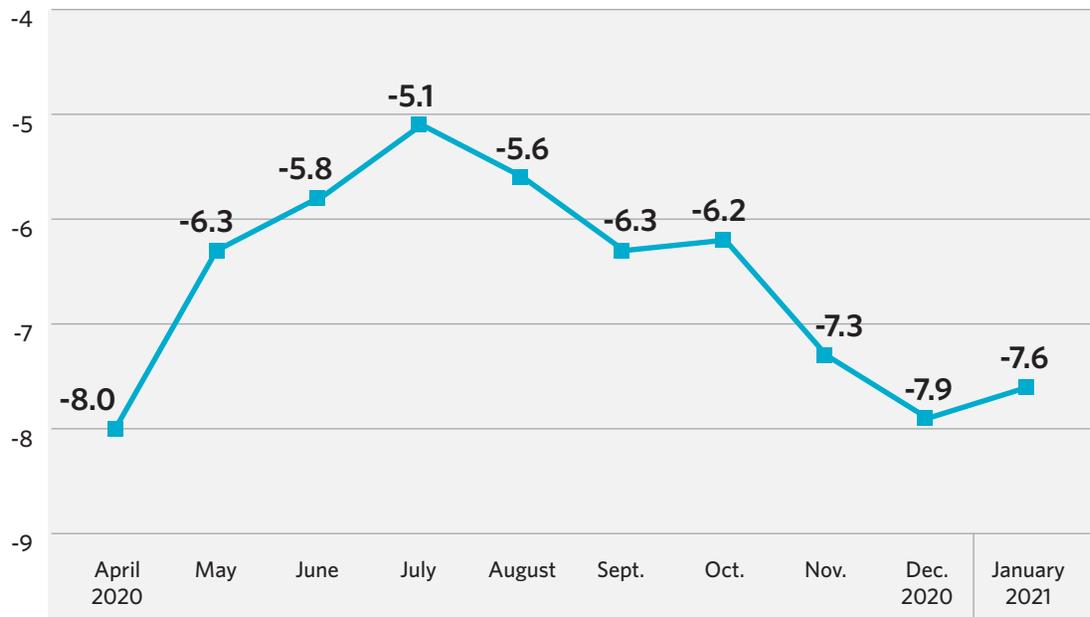
**Previous findings (June 2020) indicate that one quarter of respondents are likely to return to their previous spending habits. Over six months later, thirty-five percent of individuals report that they will go back to prior spending habits.** Among those who will not return to their prior spending habits, the most commonly reported reasons are fear over infection risk (24 percent) and worry about job/income security (21 per cent).



# The Mental Health Index™

The Mental Health Index™ (MHI) is a measure of deviation from the benchmark<sup>1</sup> of mental health and risk. **The overall Mental Health Index™ for January 2021 is -8 points.** An 8-point decrease from the pre-COVID-19 benchmark reflects a population whose mental health is similar to the most distressed seven percent of the benchmark population.

Current month January 2021:	<b>-8</b>	December 2020: -8
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January marks the tenth consecutive month where the Mental Health Index™ reflects strained mental health in the U.S. population

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



## Mental Health Index™ sub-scores

For the third consecutive month, the lowest Mental Health Index™ sub-score is for the risk measure of anxiety (-9.7). Depression and work productivity follow, both with a score of -9.2. Isolation (-8.9) and optimism (-7.0) also have scores below the benchmark. Financial risk has the most favourable mental health score (5.2), followed by general psychological health (1.4).

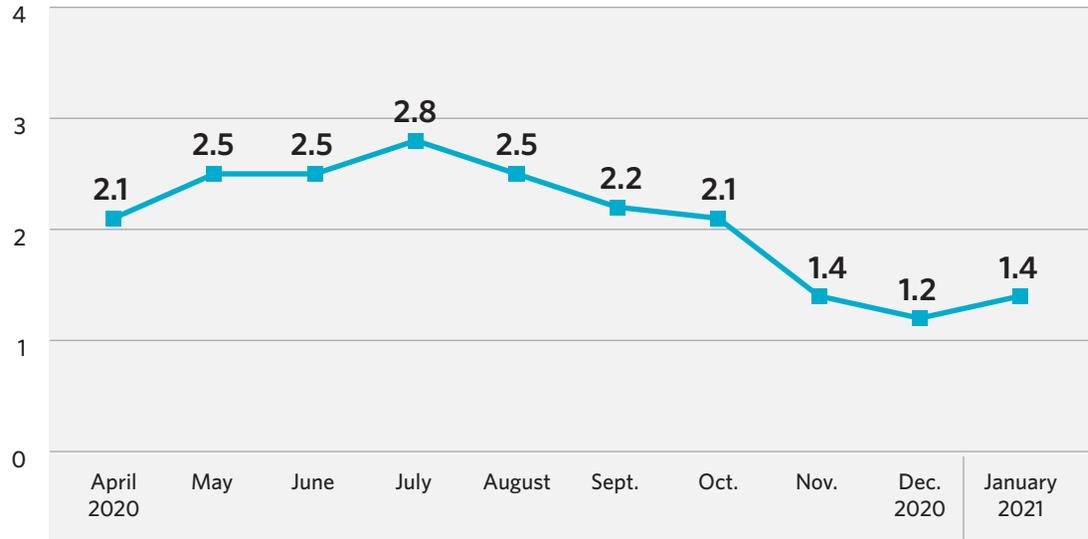
- All sub-scores improved in January when compared to December.
- The most improved risk measures in January are work productivity and optimism.
- The financial risk score remains the strongest of all sub-scores and is above the pre-2020 benchmark.

MHI sub-scores <sup>2</sup>	January 2021	December 2020
Anxiety	-9.7	-10.2
Depression	-9.2	-9.7
Work productivity	-9.2	-9.9
Isolation	-8.9	-9.0
Optimism	-7.0	-7.7
Psychological health	1.4	1.2
Financial risk	5.2	5.1

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



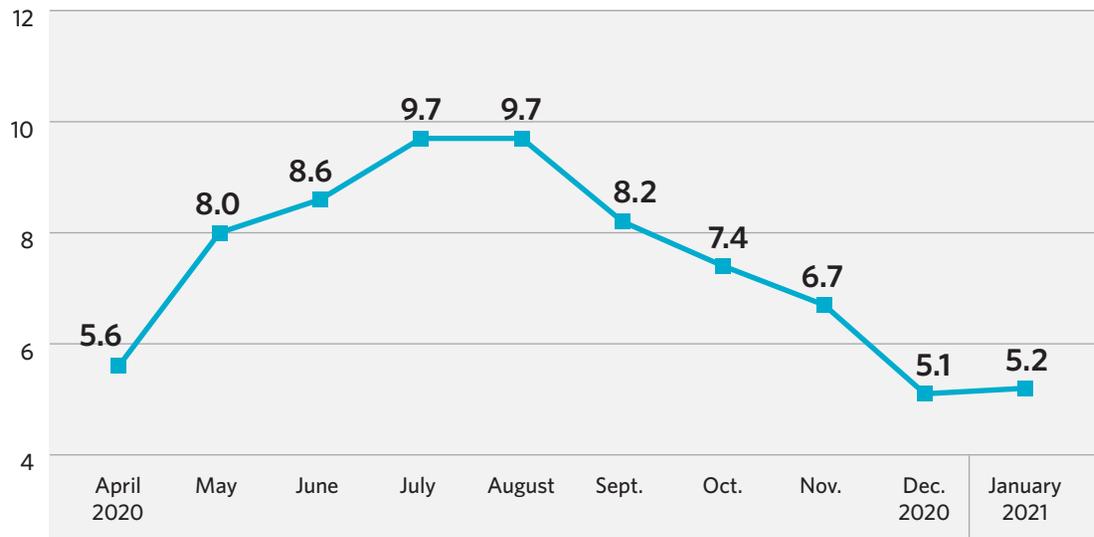
### General psychological health



### General psychological health

From May to August, a modest improvement in general psychological health was observed. Since September, the psychological health of Americans has deteriorated, culminating in the lowest score in December 2020 (1.2). In January, the psychological health risk score of Americans 1.4, a slight improvement over December’s low.

### Financial Risk



### Financial Risk

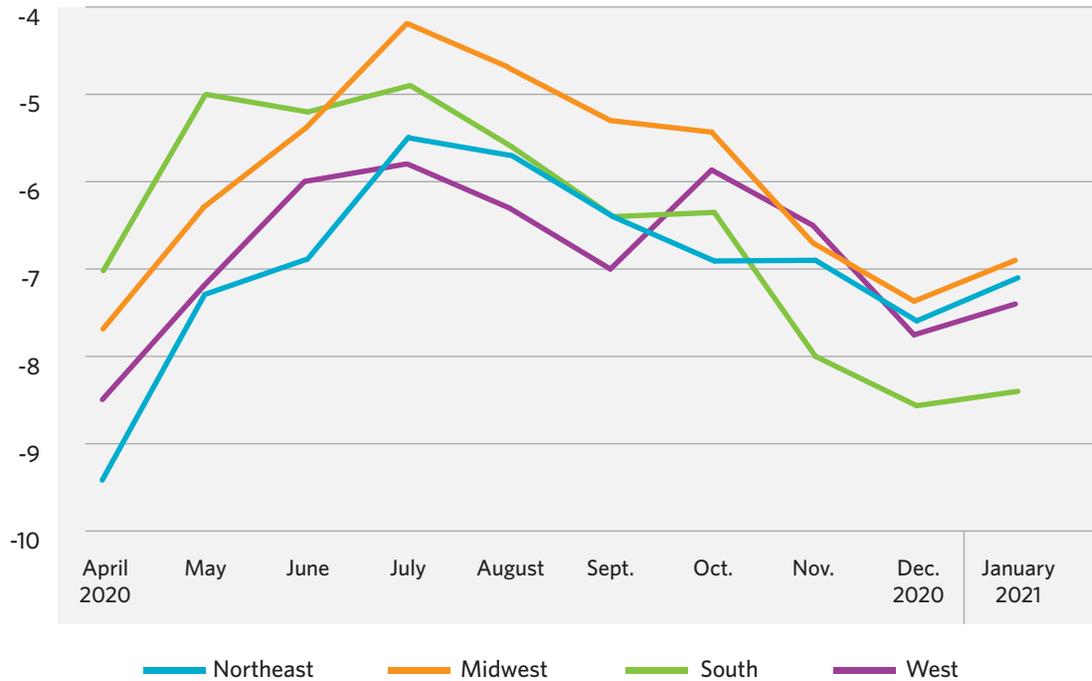
Financial risk continues to be the strongest sub-scale and is above the pre-2020 benchmark; however, the peak financial risk scores occurred in July and August (9.7). Since August, the financial risk score has declined to its lowest point in December (5.1). In January 2021, the score remains nearly equal to its December low.



# The Mental Health Index™ (regional)

Regional mental health scores since April had shown general improvement until July; however, since July, all regions had shown a declining trend to December. In January, modest improvements are observed in all regions.

United States regional Mental Health Index™ scores





## Demographics

- For ten consecutive months, females (-9.9) have a significantly lower mental health score than males (-5.0); we have also observed that mental health scores improve with age.
- The variance in the mental health score between those with and without children has been observed since April, and results in January continue this trend with a lower score for those with at least one child (-11.8) when compared to those without children (-5.4).

## Employment

- Overall, seven percent of respondents are unemployed. While most individuals remain employed, sixteen percent report reduced hours or reduced salary since April 2020.
- Individuals reporting reduced salary when compared to the prior month (-18.5) have the lowest mental health score, followed by those not currently employed (-15.5) and those who report working fewer hours when compared to the prior month (-15.1).
- Managers have a lower mental health score (-8.4) when compared to non-managers (-6.4).
- Twenty-one percent of respondents participate in the gig economy; the mental health scores of individuals working part-time hours in the gig economy (-11.4) and those working multiple part-time gigs (-11.6) are lower than individuals who do not participate in the gig economy (-4.9).
- Individuals working in organizations with more than 10,000 employees have the highest mental health score -4.1.
- Respondents who report working for companies with 51-100 employees have the lowest mental health score (-9.6).

## Emergency savings

- Individuals without emergency savings continue to experience a lower score in mental health (-22.8) than the overall group. Those reporting having an emergency fund have a mental health score of -2.1.



Employment status	Jan. 2021	Dec. 2020
<b>Employed</b> (no change in hours/salary)	-5.2	-6.0
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	-15.1	-15.5
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	-18.5	-19.9
Not currently employed	-15.5	-11.7
Age group	Jan. 2021	Dec. 2020
Age 20-29	-19.3	-20.2
Age 30-39	-13.7	-14.1
Age 40-49	-9.0	-9.9
Age 50-59	-3.1	-3.2
<b>Age 60-69</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>
Number of children	Jan. 2021	Dec. 2020
<b>No children in household</b>	<b>-5.4</b>	<b>-5.9</b>
1 child	-11.8	-12.9
2 children	-12.5	-12.4
3 children or more	-14.2	-12.0

Region	Jan. 2021	Dec. 2020
Northeast	-7.1	-7.6
<b>Midwest</b>	<b>-6.9</b>	<b>-7.4</b>
South	-8.4	-8.6
West	-7.4	-7.8
Gender	Jan. 2021	Dec. 2020
<b>Male</b>	<b>-5.0</b>	<b>-5.6</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>-9.9</b>	<b>-9.9</b>
Income	Jan. 2021	Dec. 2020
Household income <\$30K/annum	-18.2	-17.9
\$30K to <\$60K/annum	-11.6	-11.7
\$60K to <\$100K	-6.8	-6.9
\$100K to <\$150K	-5.0	-5.6
<b>\$150K or more</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.5</b>

Employer size	Jan. 2021	Dec. 2020
Self-employed/sole proprietor	-7.2	-9.0
2-50 employees	-7.4	-7.2
51-100 employees	-9.6	-11.9
101-500 employees	-8.4	-8.5
501-1,000 employees	-8.8	-9.0
1,001-5,000 employees	-7.5	-7.7
5,001-10,000 employees	-4.8	-5.7
<b>More than 10,000 employees</b>	<b>-4.1</b>	<b>-4.3</b>
Manager	Jan. 2021	
Manager	-8.4	
<b>Non-manager</b>	<b>-6.4</b>	
Gig economy	Jan. 2021	
<b>Not part of the gig economy</b>	<b>-4.9</b>	
Supplementing income from steady job	-18.8	
Full-time freelancer	-16.3	
Part-time freelancer	-11.4	
Multiple part-time gigs	-11.6	

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)

For the tenth consecutive month, full-time students have the lowest mental health score (-22.5). This continues to be notably lower than the next lowest score, among individuals in Food Services (-16.8), and Information and Cultural Industries (-13.4). The highest mental health scores this month are observed among individuals employed in Public Administration (1.2), Finance and Insurance (-3.8), and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (-3.8).

Individuals employed in Management of Companies and Accommodation have seen the greatest improvement in mental health since last month.

**Improvements from the prior month are shown in the table below:**

Industry	January 2021	December 2020	Improvement
Management of Companies and Enterprises	-7.8	-12.1	4.3
Accommodation	-6.9	-10.8	3.9
Information and Cultural Industries	-13.4	-17.0	3.6
Wholesale Trade	-11.9	-15.2	3.3
Public Administration	1.2	-1.3	2.6
Administrative and Support services	-8.5	-10.9	2.3
Other services (except Public Administration)	-5.6	-7.8	2.2
Educational Services	-5.7	-6.4	0.7
Health Care and Social Assistance	-8.0	-8.7	0.7
Finance and Insurance	-3.8	-4.2	0.4
Manufacturing	-5.5	-5.7	0.2
Other	-8.1	-8.2	0.1
Food Services	-16.8	-16.7	-0.1
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	-8.4	-8.2	-0.2
Construction	-10.8	-10.3	-0.5
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	-3.8	-3.3	-0.5
Transportation and Warehousing	-9.5	-9.0	-0.6
Retail Trade	-10.6	-9.6	-1.0
Utilities	-11.9	-10.2	-1.7
I am a student	-22.5	-19.8	-2.7
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	-8.3	-5.4	-2.9
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	-6.6	-2.8	-3.7

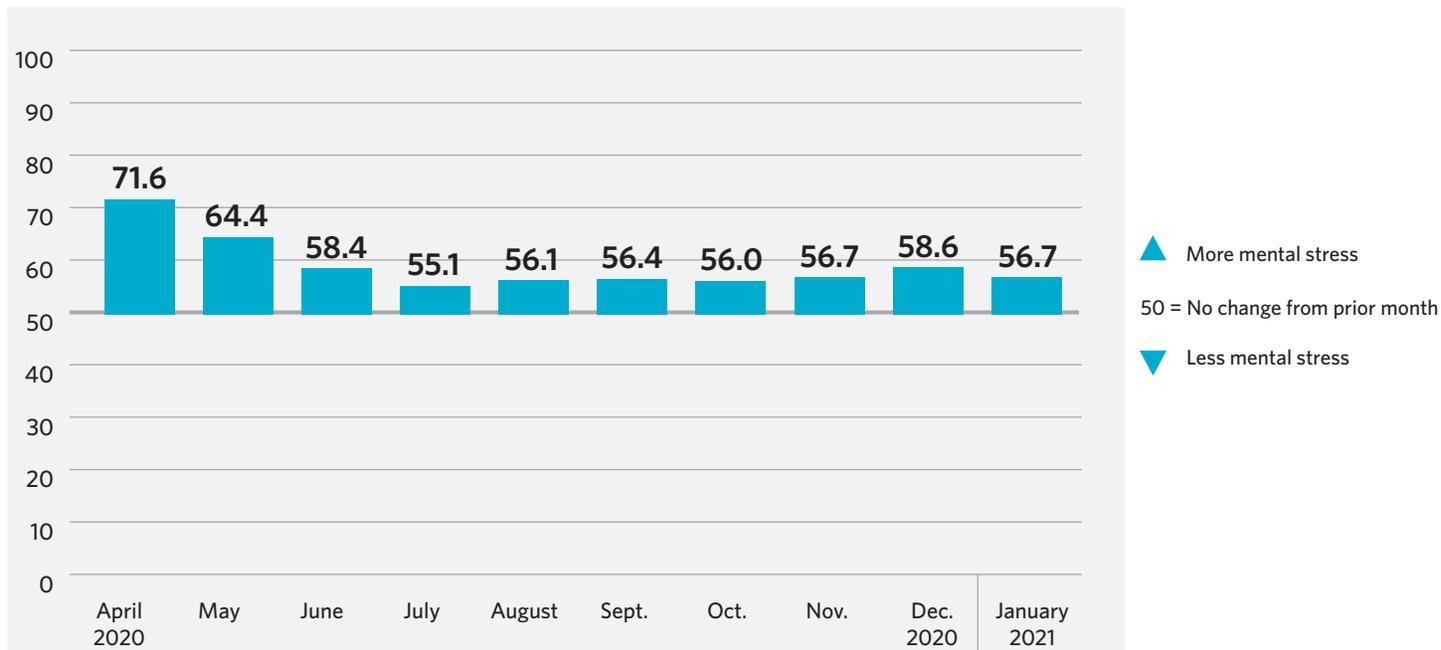


# The Mental Stress Change score

The Mental Stress Change Score (MStressChg) is a measure of the level of reported mental stress, compared to the prior month. **The Mental Stress Change score for January 2021 is 56.7.** This reflects a net increase in mental stress compared to the prior month.

The current score indicates that 23 percent of the population is experiencing more mental stress compared to the prior month, with 9 percent experiencing less. A continued increase in mental stress over the last ten months indicates a significant accumulation of strain in the population.

Current month January 2021:	<b>56.7</b>	December 2020: 58.6
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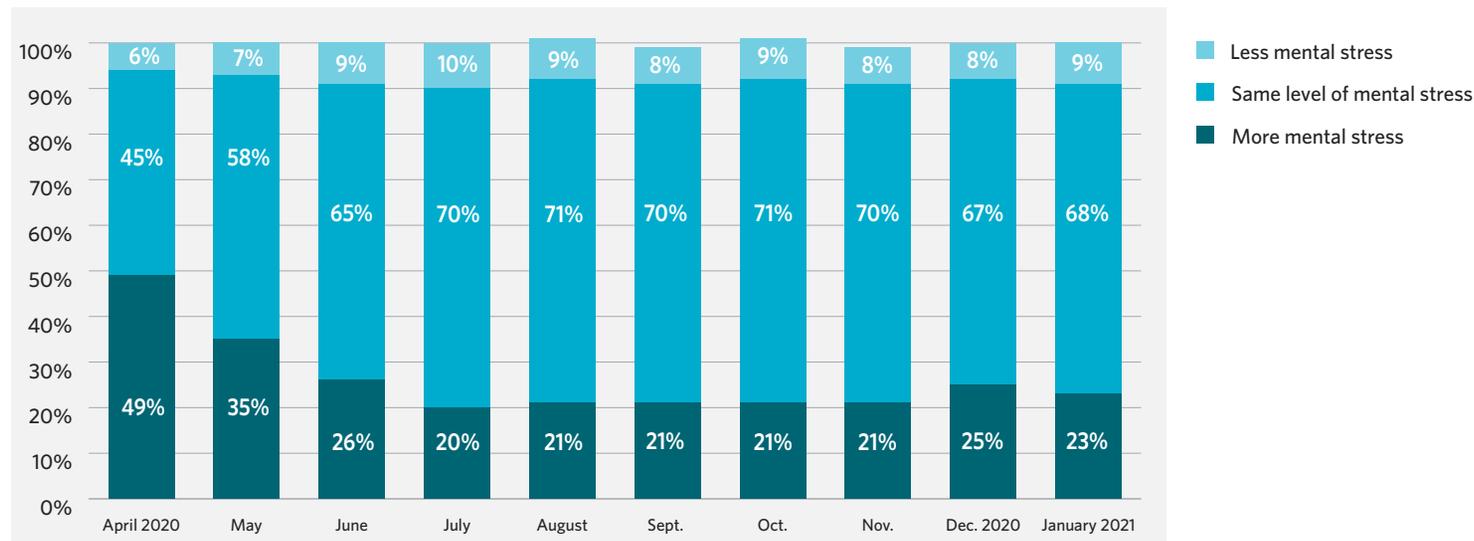
# Mental Stress Change (percentages)

Mental Stress Change tracks an individual’s stress changes each month. The percentages of those experiencing more stress, the same level of stress, and less stress for each month of the survey are shown in the graph below.

Over the last ten months, the percentage of those experiencing more mental stress than the previous month has steadily decreased; however, the data shows that those experiencing less mental stress are insufficient to lower the overall Mental Stress Change score to below 50 (the level at which stress is lower than the previous month). As the proportion of individuals reporting the same level of stress or more stress than the previous month continues to significantly outweigh the proportion reporting less mental stress, the population will continue to feel the effects of significantly increased stress and will not be able to reach a more sustainable and health level of stress.

In April, 49 percent of individuals reported an increase in mental stress. While those reporting increased month-over-month mental stress has decreased to 23 percent in January 2021, 68 percent of respondents report the same level of mental stress and only 9 percent report a decrease in mental stress.

## Mental Stress Change by Month





## Demographics

- As was reported in prior months, and as evidenced again in January, younger respondents are experiencing a greater increase in mental stress when compared to older respondents.
- Since April 2020, females have had larger increases in mental stress when compared with males.

## Geography

- Considering geography, the greatest increase in stress month-over-month was for respondents living in the Midwest (58.2), followed by the Northeast (56.5), the West (56.3), and the South (55.9).

## Employment

- The greatest increase in mental stress is seen in employed people with reduced salary (63.9), followed by employed people with reduced hours (60.7), when compared to unemployed people (60.3) and employed people with no change to salary or hours (55.4).
- The greatest increase in mental stress is observed among managers (58.4) while non-managers have a more modest increase in mental stress (55.2).



Employment status	Jan. 2021	Dec. 2020
<b>Employed</b> (no change in hours/salary)	<b>55.4</b>	<b>56.9</b>
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	60.7	64.4
<b>Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)</b>	<b>63.9</b>	<b>69.6</b>
Not currently employed	60.3	63.8
Age group	Jan. 2021	Dec. 2020
<b>Age 20-29</b>	<b>61.9</b>	<b>65.5</b>
Age 30-39	60.3	61.9
Age 40-49	56.7	58.8
Age 50-59	54.4	57.1
<b>Age 60-69</b>	<b>53.4</b>	<b>53.4</b>
Number of children	Jan. 2021	Dec. 2020
<b>No children in household</b>	<b>55.4</b>	<b>57.0</b>
1 child	59.2	62.2
2 children	59.3	<b>63.3</b>
<b>3 children or more</b>	<b>61.4</b>	61.0

Region	Jan. 2021	Dec. 2020
Northeast	56.5	<b>57.2</b>
<b>Midwest</b>	<b>58.2</b>	<b>60.1</b>
<b>South</b>	<b>55.9</b>	58.2
West	56.3	59.3
Gender	Jan. 2021	Dec. 2020
<b>Male</b>	<b>55.2</b>	<b>57.6</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>58.1</b>	<b>59.6</b>
Income	Jan. 2021	Dec. 2020
Household income <\$30K/annum	57.3	<b>61.5</b>
<b>\$30K to &lt;\$60K/annum</b>	<b>58.8</b>	60.2
\$60K to <\$100K	57.6	59.2
\$100K to <\$150K	55.8	58.0
<b>\$150K or more</b>	<b>54.2</b>	<b>55.4</b>

Employer size	Jan. 2021	Dec. 2020
Self-employed/sole proprietor	55.8	57.5
2-50 employees	56.2	57.6
51-100 employees	56.6	59.7
101-500 employees	57.7	58.3
<b>501-1,000 employees</b>	<b>59.7</b>	<b>61.4</b>
1,001-5,000 employees	56.9	59.8
5,001-10,000 employees	55.0	58.1
<b>More than 10,000 employees</b>	<b>54.8</b>	<b>56.4</b>
Manager	Jan. 2021	
Manager	<b>58.4</b>	
<b>Non-manager</b>	<b>55.2</b>	
Gig economy	Jan. 2021	
Not part of the gig economy	55.1	
<b>Supplementing income from steady job</b>	<b>64.1</b>	
Full-time freelancer	63.0	
Part-time freelancer	59.3	
<b>Multiple part-time gigs</b>	<b>53.7</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)

Mental Stress Change scores for the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, Accommodation, and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting industries are less steep when compared to the prior month.

Full-time students have the most significant increase in mental stress (62.7), followed by individuals employed Utilities (62.2), and Wholesale Trade (60.1).

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

Industry	January 2021	December 2020
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	53.9	58.3
Accommodation	54.1	59.2
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	54.7	59.2
Public Administration	54.8	55.3
Finance and Insurance	55.1	57.6
Educational Services	56.0	56.9
Construction	56.0	59.6
Manufacturing	56.1	57.7
Food Services	56.2	66.1
Other	56.3	58.4
Administrative and Support services	56.5	58.7
Transportation and Warehousing	56.6	60.5
Health Care and Social Assistance	56.8	61.1
Other services (except Public Administration)	57.1	57.9
Information and Cultural Industries	57.5	63.8
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	57.5	55.9
Retail Trade	57.8	59.4
Management of Companies and Enterprises	58.1	54.4
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	58.2	52.3
Wholesale Trade	60.1	59.1
Utilities	62.2	59.1
I am a student	62.7	68.1



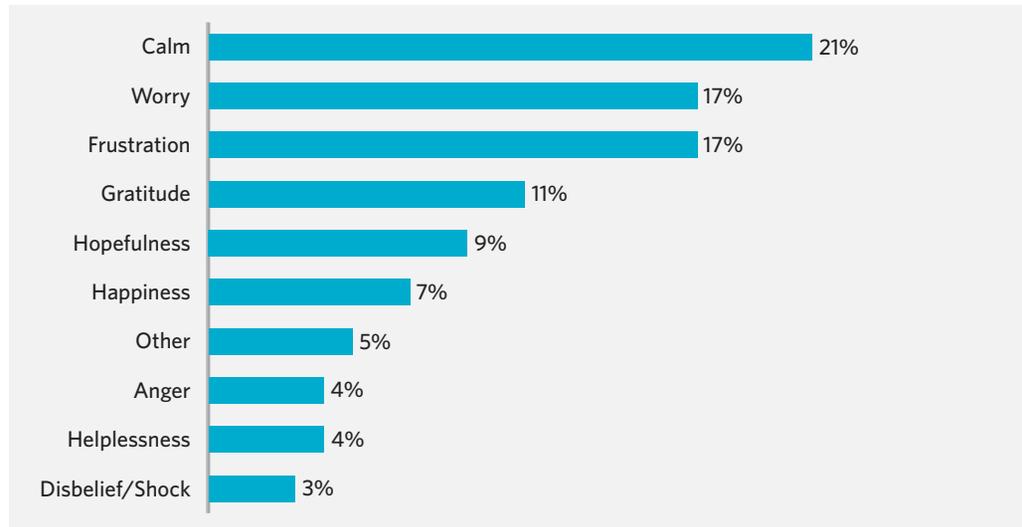
# Spotlight

## Emotional state

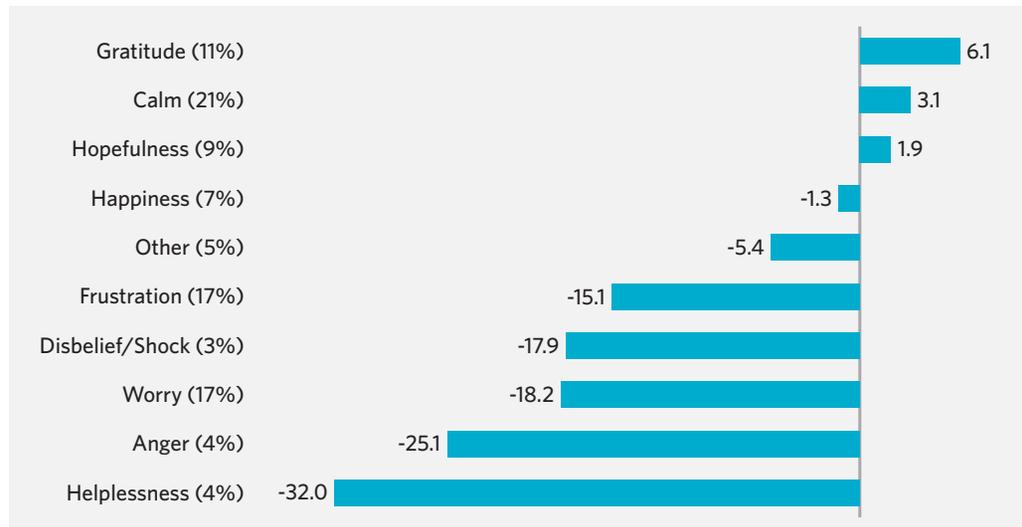
Previous findings in June and August 2020 indicate that the most commonly reported emotions that individuals were experiencing were worry, calm and frustration. Nearly one year into the pandemic, the most commonly reported emotions continue to be calm (21 percent), worry (17 percent), and frustration (17 percent) and their proportions are similar as observed in prior months.

- Consistent with the June and August findings, individuals reporting positive emotions (gratitude, happiness, calm, and hopefulness) have significantly higher mental health scores when compared to individuals reporting negative emotions (frustration, worry, disbelief/shock, anger, and helplessness).
- Individuals reporting fewer hours at work or reduced salary are nearly fifty percent more likely to report feeling frustration or worry when compared to those who are fully employed; those who are fully employed are almost twice as likely to report feeling calm when compared to individuals working fewer hours or with reduced salary.

### Main emotion felt most often right now



### MHI score by the main emotion felt most often right now





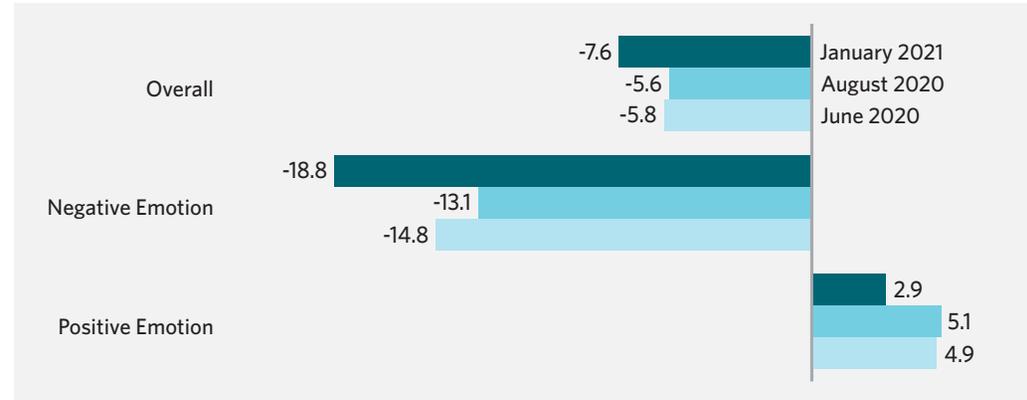
- Females are fifty percent more likely to report worry as their primary emotion and fifty percent less likely to report calm when compared to males.

### Changing priorities due to the COVID-19 pandemic

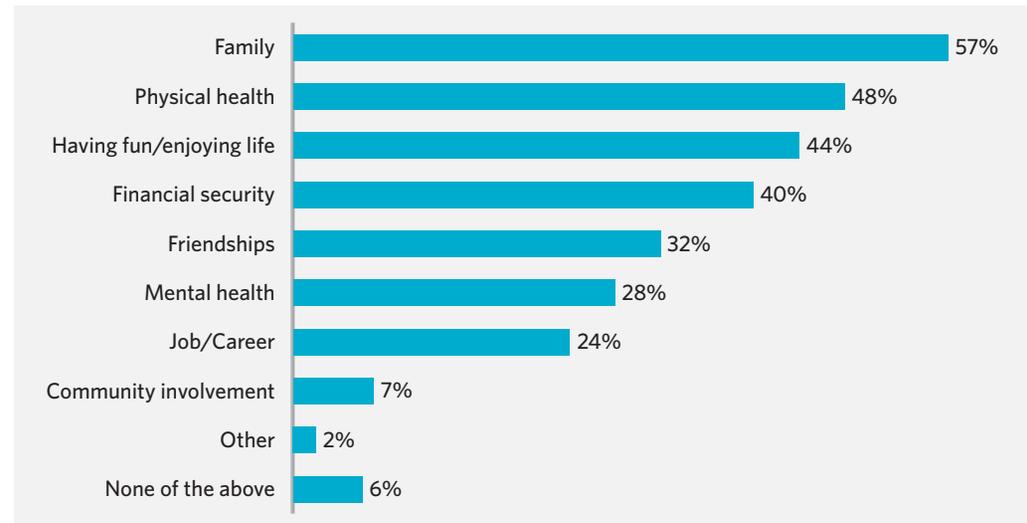
As Americans continue to manage their daily lives in a time of global pandemic, thoughts of temporary adjustments are moving to what the “new normal” could look like. Many Americans are rethinking their priorities amid the ongoing impact of the pandemic on work, finances, social relationships, physical and mental health. Respondents were asked to select three areas they would like to focus on when compared to before the pandemic.

- The most commonly reported areas respondents would like to focus on are family (57 percent), physical health (48 percent), having fun/enjoying life (44 percent), and financial security (40 percent).
- Nearly thirty percent (28 percent) report wanting to focus on their mental health; this group has the lowest mental health score (-17.4).
- Individuals between the ages of 20 and 29 are nearly twice as likely to report wanting to focus on their mental health when compared to those over the age of 50.
- Younger individuals are significantly more likely to want to focus on their job/career (44 per cent).

### Longitudinal comparison of emotion type and MHI score



### Areas individuals would like to focus on when compared to before the pandemic





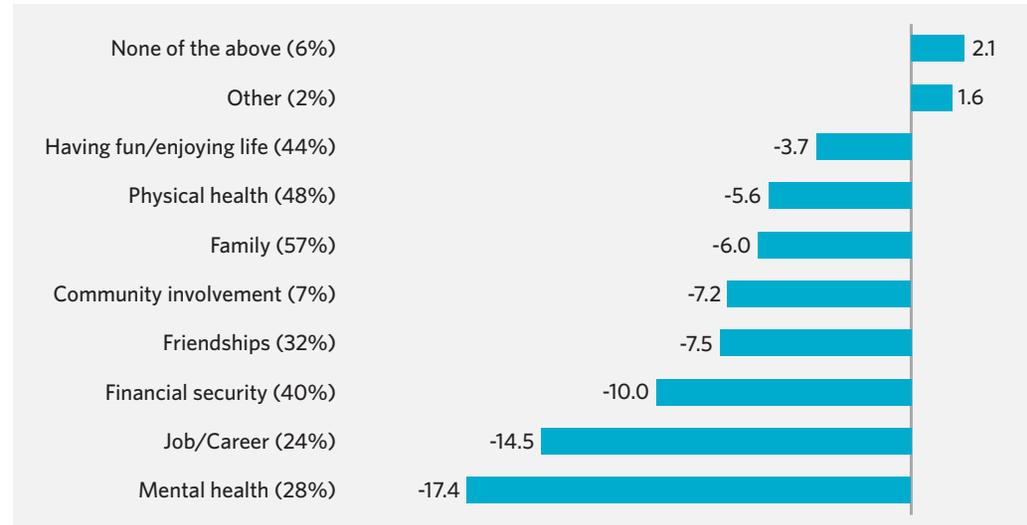
- Respondents over the age of 60 are fifty percent more likely to want to focus on their physical health when compared to individuals between the ages of 20 and 29.

### Positive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

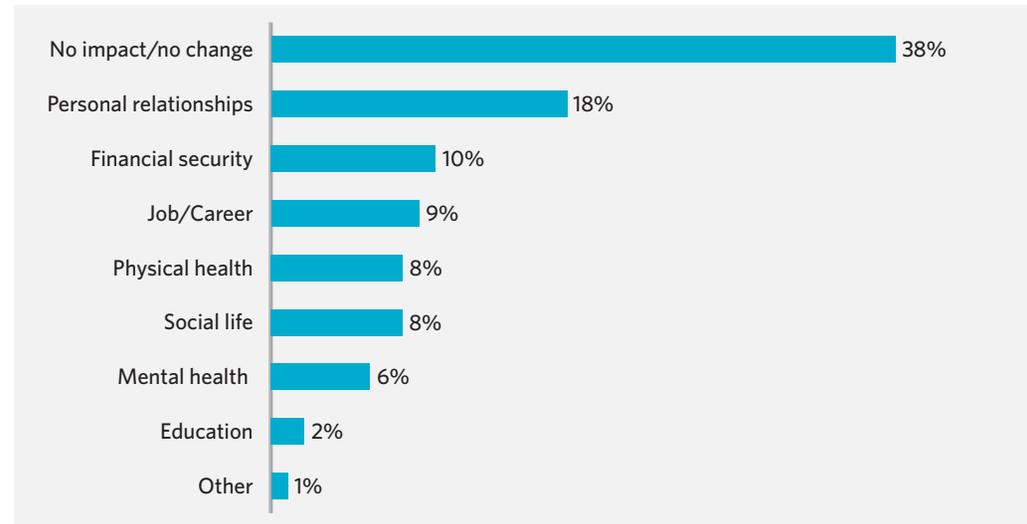
The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has touched Americans in different ways – restricted social lives, the shift to virtual work, illness, or death of loved ones, etc. At the same time, some Americans are reporting inspired changes or unseen benefits because of the pandemic. Respondents were asked to indicate the areas that have changed positively because of the pandemic.

- The most commonly reported area of positive impact is personal relationships (18 percent), followed by financial security (10 percent), and job/career (9 percent).
- Respondents reporting a positive change in their social lives have the highest mental health score (-2.6).
- Individuals between 20 and 29 years of age are approximately three times more likely to report some positive impact when compared to those over the age of 50.

### MHI by areas individuals would like to focus on when compared to before the pandemic



### Areas that have changed positively due to the pandemic



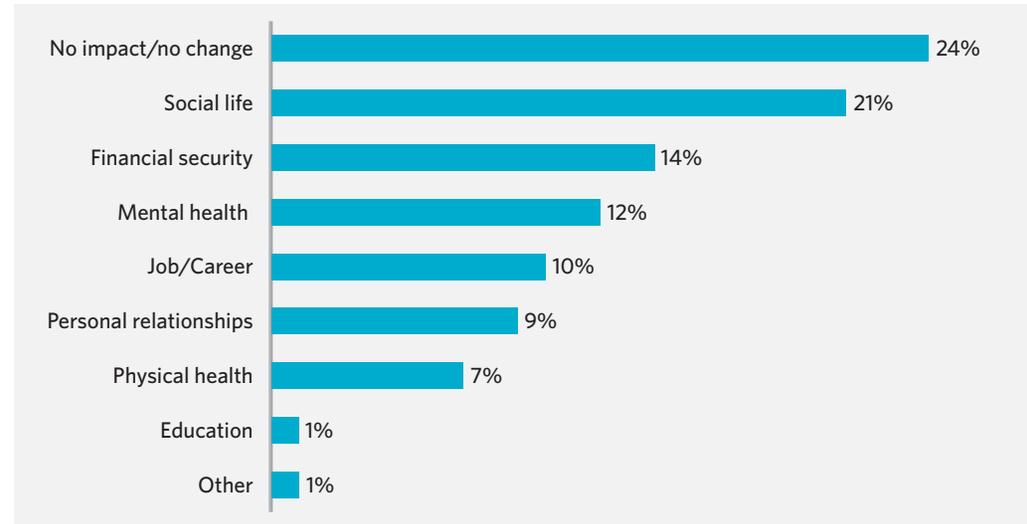


## Negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

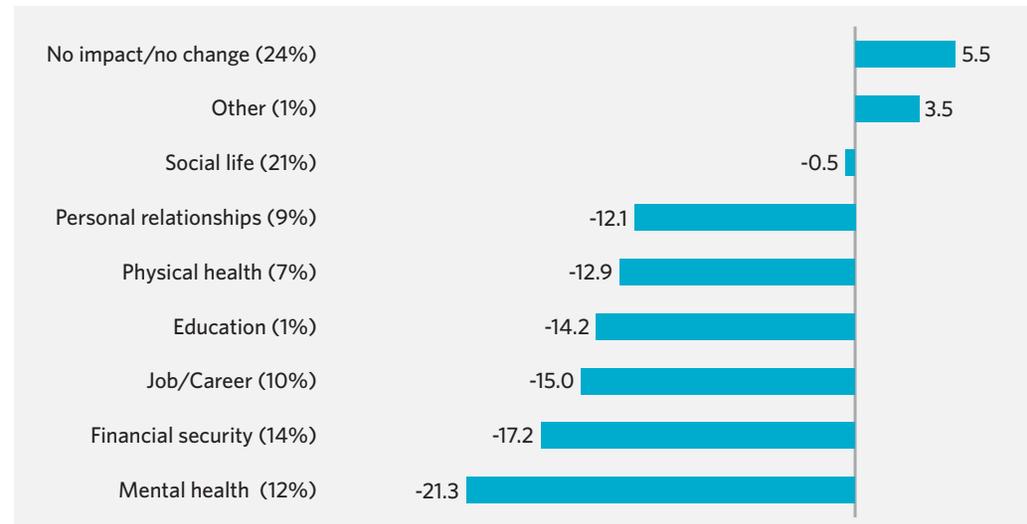
As expected, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult on most Americans. Respondents were asked to indicate the area of their lives that has changed most negatively because of the pandemic.

- The most commonly reported area of negative change is social life (21 percent), followed by financial security (14 percent), and mental health (12 percent).
- The lowest mental health score is observed among individuals reporting that the most significant negative impact is to their mental health (-21.3), followed by those reporting a negative change to their financial security (-17.2), and those reporting a negative impact on their job/career (-15.0).
- Individuals under the age of 40 are more than twice as likely to report the most significant negative impact on mental health when compared to individuals over 60 years old.
- Individuals working fewer hours or with reduced pay/salary are nearly three times as likely to report that the most negative change is their job/career when compared to those fully employed.

### Areas that have changed negatively due to the pandemic



### MHI score by areas that have changed negatively due to the pandemic



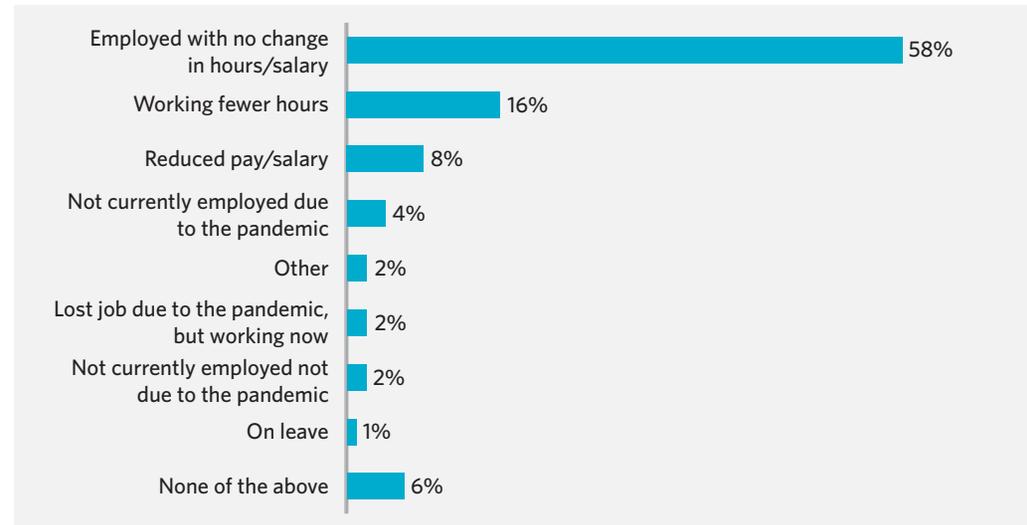


## Employment during the pandemic

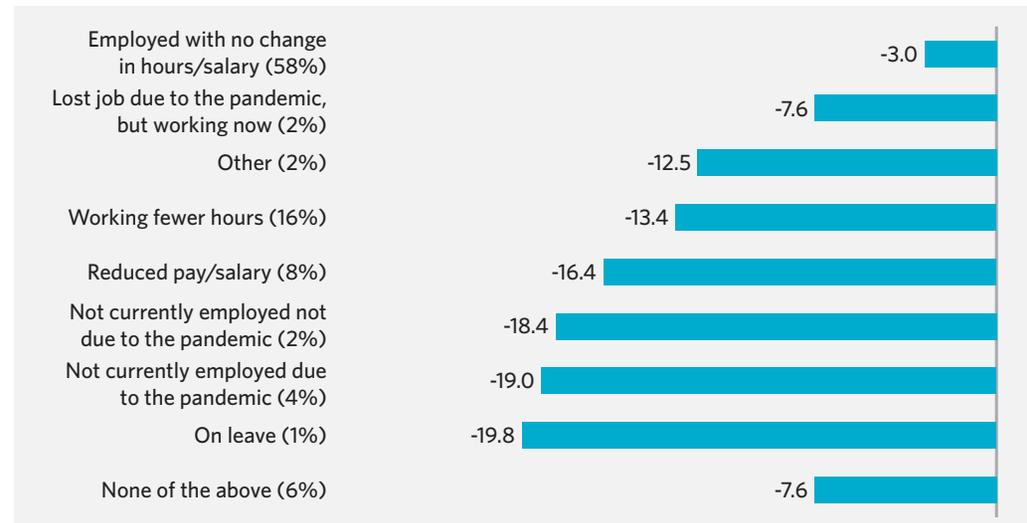
As Americans focus on managing through the pandemic, employment remains a critical stabilizer. Finances and isolation continue to be the strongest drivers of mental health and employment is central to offsetting the risk of poor mental health. Respondents were asked about their employment situation during the pandemic.

- Fifty-eight percent of respondents have no change in their hours or salary, whereas sixteen percent report working fewer hours, and eight percent report reduced pay/salary.
- Individuals reporting reduced pay/salary during the pandemic have a mental health score nearly nine points below the national average; those working fewer hours have a mental health score nearly six points below the average.
- Individuals working for employers with less than 5,000 employees or who are self-employed are more than twice as likely to report working fewer hours compared to before the pandemic.

## Employment situation during the pandemic



## MHI score by employment situation during the pandemic



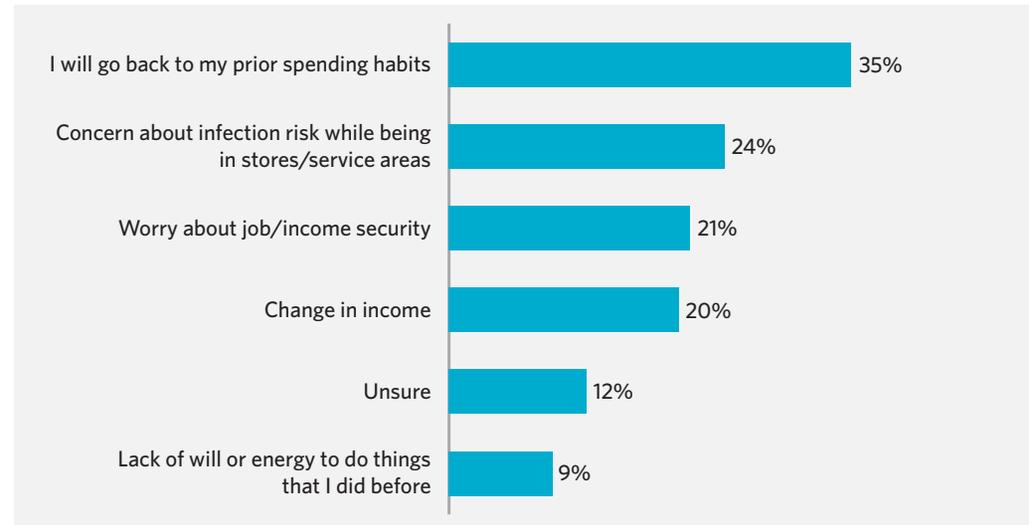


## Spending habits

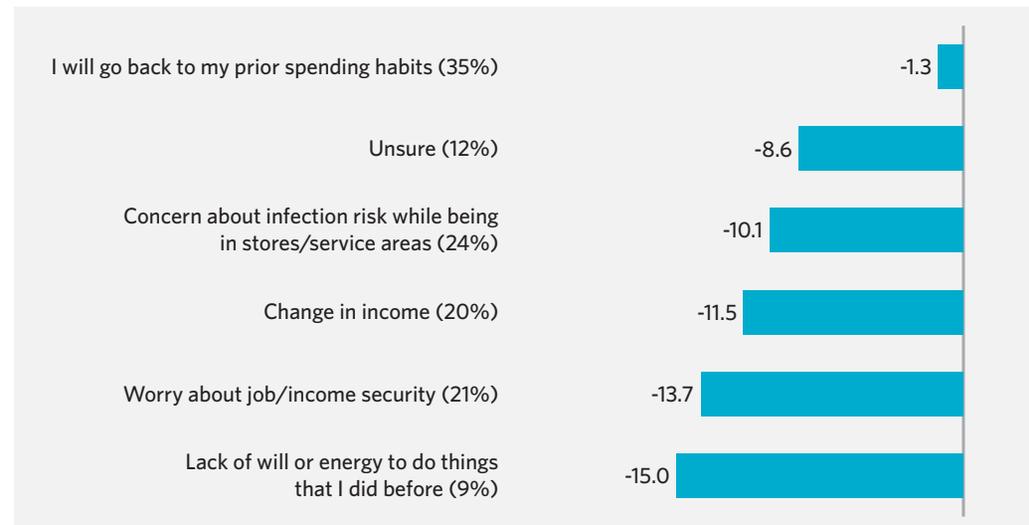
Previous findings (June 2020) indicate that one-quarter of respondents are likely to return to their previous spending habits. Over six months later, thirty-five percent of individuals report that they will go back to prior spending habits.

- Among those who will not return to their prior spending habits, the most commonly reported reasons are concern about infection risk (24 percent) and worry about job/income security (21 percent).
- Respondents over the age of 40 are almost twice as likely to report that they will return to their prior spending habits when compared to those under 40 years old.
- Individuals reporting a lack of will or energy to do things they did prior to the pandemic have the lowest optimism score (-15.0), followed by those worried about job/income security (-13.7), and those with a change in income (-11.5).

## Reasons individuals will not return to prior spending habits once stores and businesses re-open



## Optimism score by reasons individuals will not return to prior spending habits once stores and businesses re-open





## 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 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 remove sampling bias. The respondents were asked to consider the prior two weeks when answering each question. The Mental Health Index™ is published monthly, starting in April 2020. The benchmark data was collected in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The data for the current report was collected between December 14 to December 23, 2020.

### 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.

### 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)

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).



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