

The Mental Health Index by LifeWorks™

Canada: 2021 year-end review

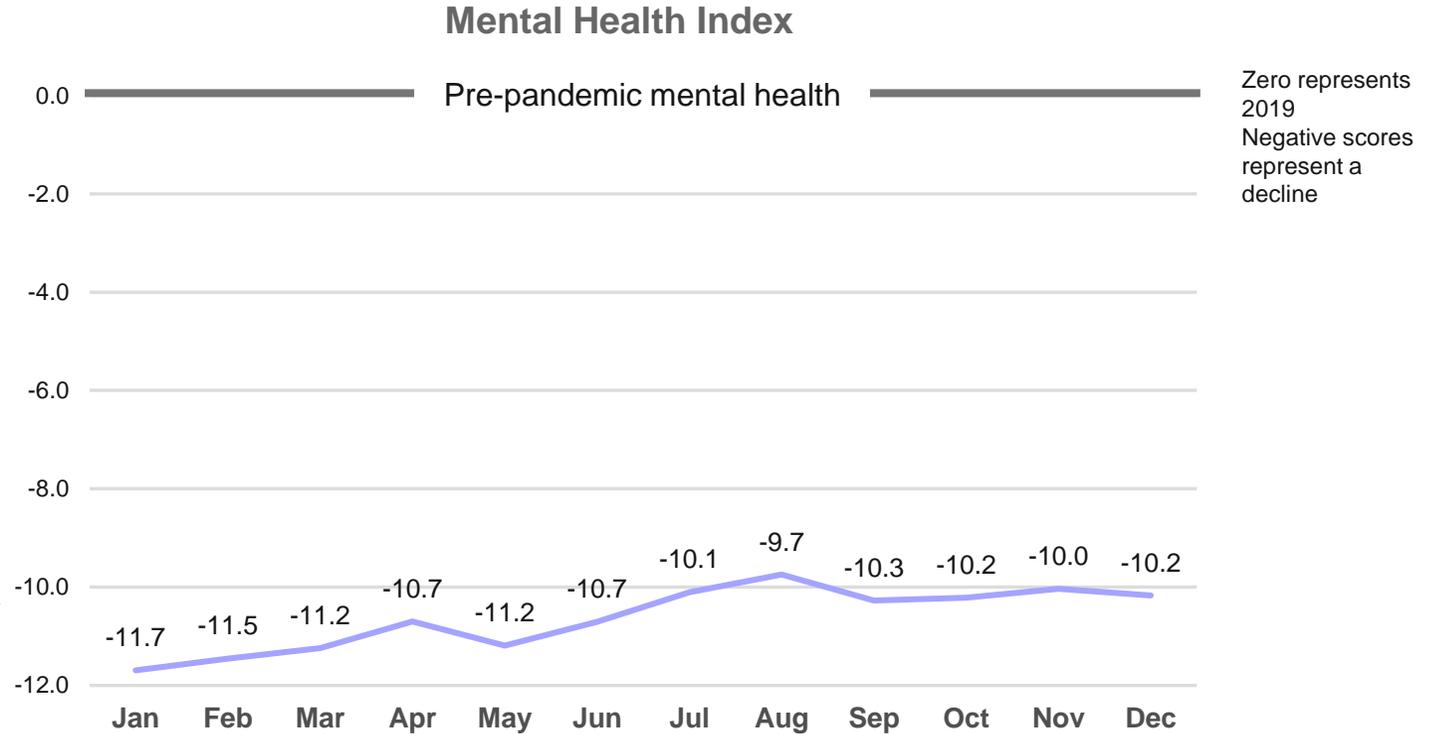


Mental Health Index trend

At the beginning of 2021, the mental health in Canada was at its lowest, equal to the score at the launch of the Index in April 2020. After four consecutive months of improvement, the score decreased in May but rebounded, reaching a high of -9.7 in August.

Following a decline in September, the mental health in Canada remained consistent through to December, closing the year at -10.2 points below the pre-2020 benchmark. At that time, the mental health of the population was equal to the **most distressed 4%** of the pre-pandemic benchmark population.

The MHI is a measure of deviation from the 2017-2019 benchmark of mental health and risk. A negative score indicates a decline in mental health compared to the benchmark period. The more negative the score, the greater the decline.

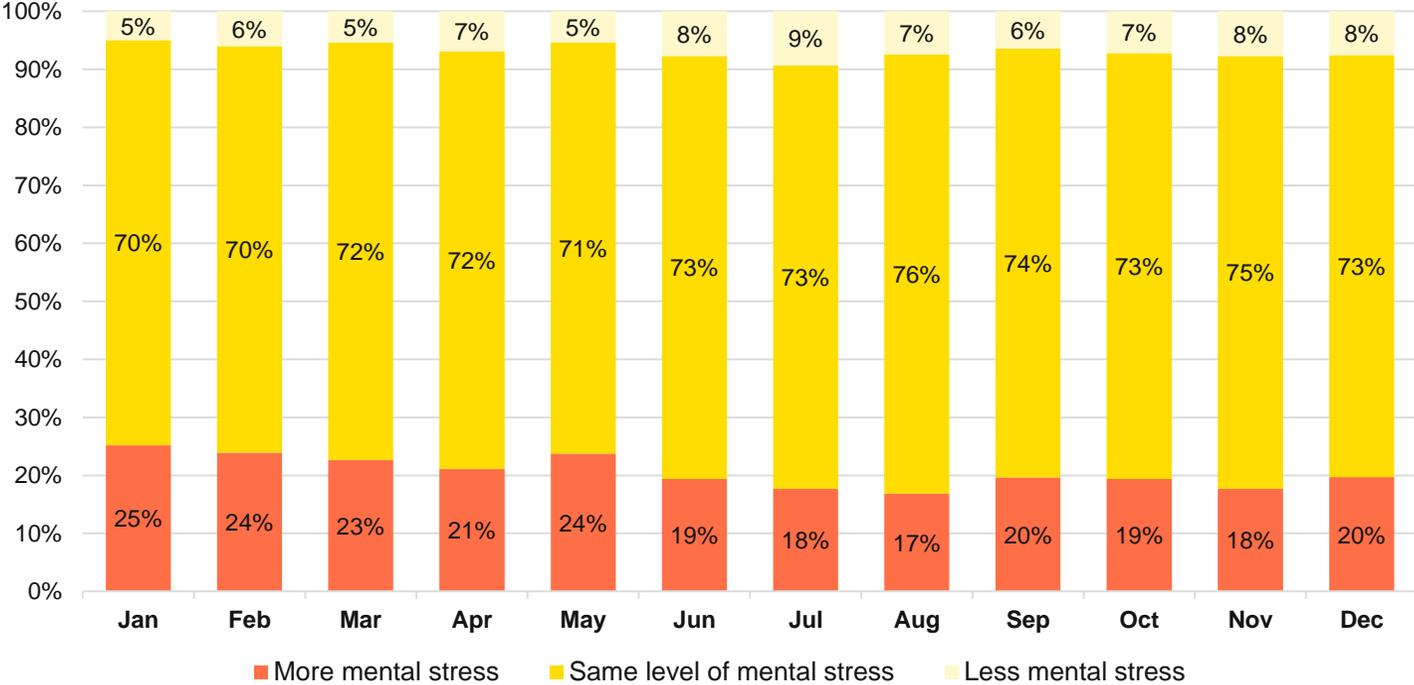


Mental stress change

From January to May 2021, approximately one-quarter of Canadians reported more mental stress compared to the prior month. From June to December, the proportion reporting more mental stress than the prior month fluctuated between 17% and 20%.

The proportion of individuals reporting the same level of mental stress or more mental stress than the previous month continues to outweigh the proportion reporting less mental stress. This suggests that in 2021, the population did not have a sustainable and healthy balance of stress.

Mental stress changes by month



Mental health of Canadians in 2021

More than two in five Canadians believe that their **career options** would be **limited** if they had a **mental health issue**, and their workplace was aware. (Dec)

- Nearly half of Canadians feel the need for **mental health support** and roughly a third wants to focus on their mental health. (Jan, Apr)
- **Mental health stigma** remains a major issue. More than one-third of Canadians would **feel negatively about themselves** if they had a mental health issue. (Feb, Dec)

- More than one in five Canadians are **less willing to access mental healthcare** during the pandemic and this group has a less favourable mental health score. (Mar)
- More than one-third of Canadians that use alcohol have **increased their consumption** since the pandemic and this group has the least favourable mental health and productivity scores. (May)
- There is an ancillary **isolation pandemic**. One in five Canadians indicate that isolation has been the most difficult for them in terms of their mental health. (Jun)
- In addition to **women, parents, post-secondary students**, those with **reduced income**, and those without **emergency savings**, are among those whose mental health has shown the **greatest decline**. (all months)

- **Women** are 70% more likely to report **worry/anxiety** as their primary emotion than men. (Sep)
- One in five **feel in crisis** or have concerns about their ability to cope. (Oct)
- Nearly one-quarter of employed Canadians report a **decline in their mental health**. (Oct)
- More than two in five Canadians believe that their **career options** would be **limited** if they had a **mental health issue**, and their workplace was aware. (Dec)



Mental health and the workplace



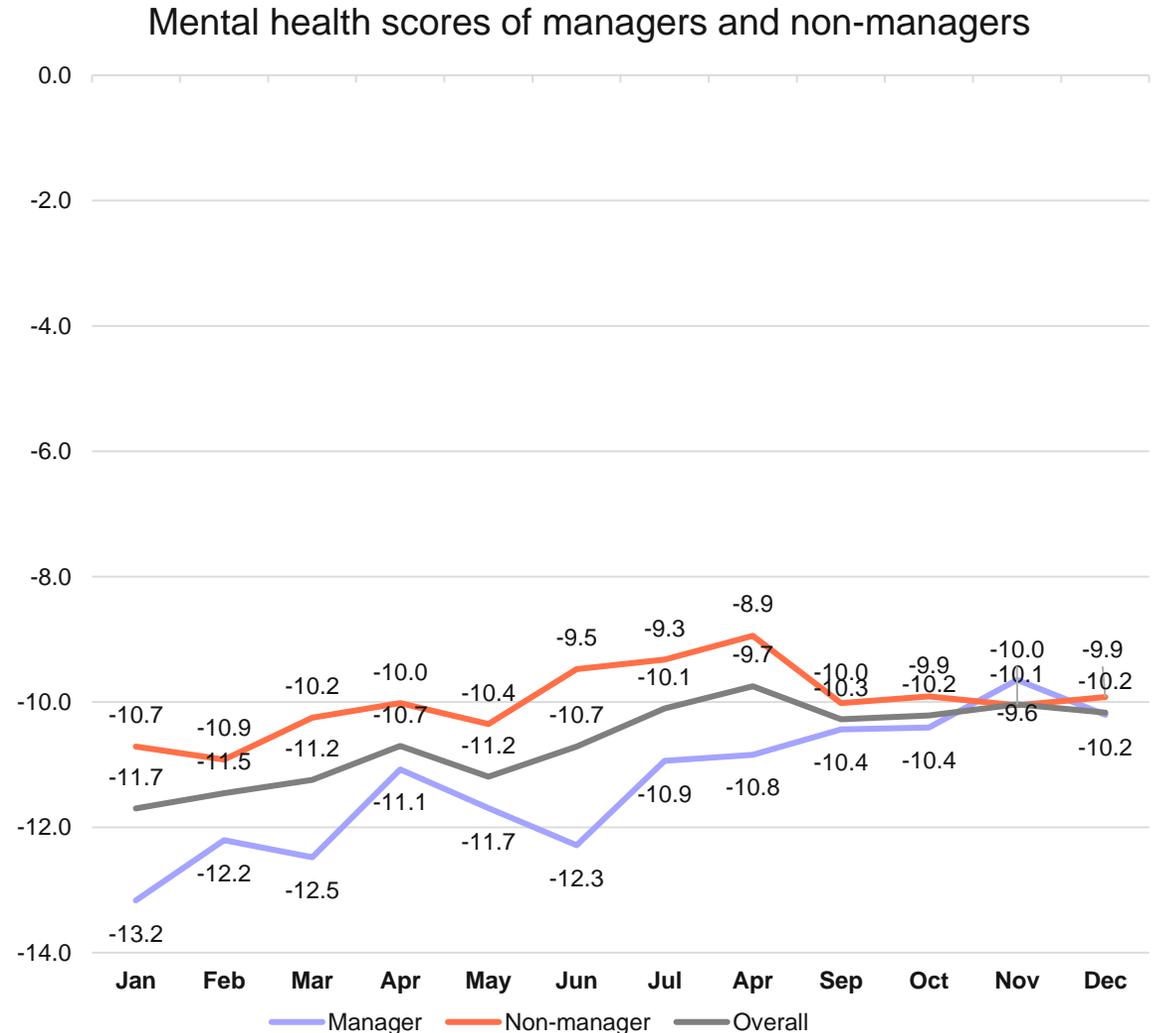
Those who feel a **sense of belonging and acceptance** at work have among the highest mental health scores and among the best isolation scores, both significantly better than national averages. (Aug)

- Employees saying that their organization supports their **personal wellbeing** and is a **great place to work** have a better mental health. (Jul, Aug)
- Those who feel a **sense of belonging and acceptance** at work have among the highest mental health scores and among the best isolation scores, both significantly better than national averages. (Aug)
- Lower **mental health** scores correspond to lower **productivity** and higher mental health scores correspond to higher productivity, a difference of 41 workdays per year. (Aug)
- One-third of Canadians report an increase in **job stress** in 2021 compared to 2020. (Sep)
- More than one-third of employed Canadians are either thinking about **leaving their job** or are unsure and this group has poorer mental health scores. (Sep)
- **Manager and peer relationships** have deteriorated since before the pandemic, which has impacted both mental health and productivity. (Oct)
- The type of flexibility that is most important for Canadians (29%) is the **flexibility to step away from work** to attend to personal issues. (Dec)
- Nearly two in five employees indicate that full flexibility, giving **choice in how, when and where they work** is best for their team. (Dec)

Spotlight on people leaders as a vulnerable group

Since January 2021, the mental health scores of managers have been lower than non-managers and lower than the overall Canadian average. Non-managers have consistently higher mental health scores than the overall Canadian population. In November, the trend reversed wherein the mental health score of managers improved to a level above non-managers and the overall Canadian average. In December, the mental health score of managers has declined to a score equal to the national average (-10.2) and slightly lower than that of non-managers (-9.9).

- Nearly half of managers would **feel more negatively** about themselves if they had a **mental health issue**, compared to a third of non-managers. (Feb)
- Managers are more likely to report an **improved relationship** with their work peers and with their leaders compared to non-managers. (Mar, Jul)
- Managers are nearly 40% more likely to report **increased job stress** than non-managers. (Sep)
- Managers are more than 70% more likely than non-managers to have concerns about their mental health and their **ability to cope** or indicate that they **feel in crisis**. (Oct)



Spotlight on parents as a vulnerable group

- Parents are nearly twice as likely as non-parents to report that the COVID-19 pandemic has a **negative impact** on their **mental health**. (Mar)
- Parents report **more substance use** than non-parents and indicate an impact on their work and home lives. (May)
- Nearly 1 in 5 parents are concerned for the **mental health** of their **child(ren)**. (Jun)
- 64% of parents **work when feeling unwell** at least one day per week compared to 36% of non-parents. (Aug)
- Parents are more than 40% more likely than non-parents to report wanting **flexibility** in **work location** and 30% more likely to report wanting flexibility in **work hours**. (Sep)
- Parents are more than 50% more likely than non-parents to be **in crisis** or to have concerns about their ability to cope. (Oct)

