

The Mental Health Index by LifeWorks™

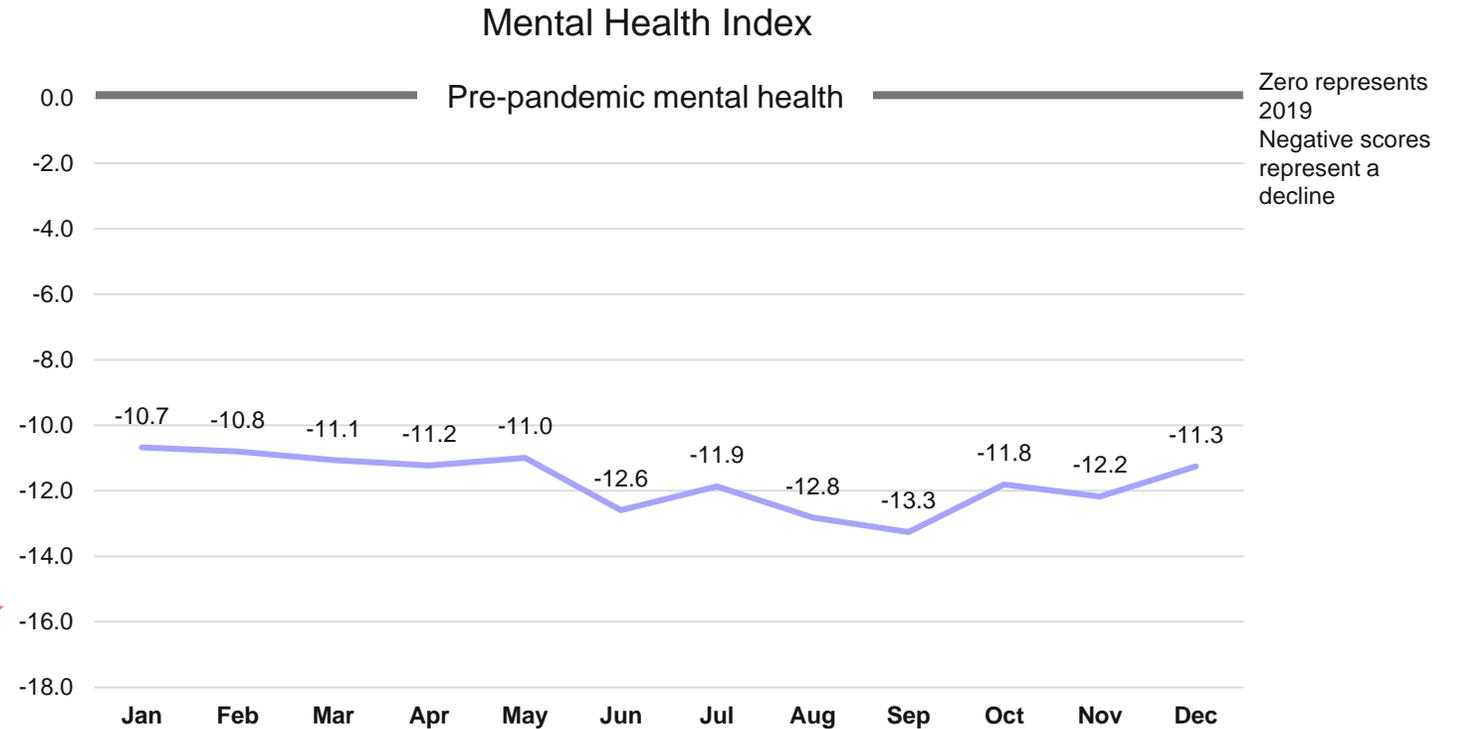
Australia: 2021 year-end review



Mental Health Index trend

At the beginning of 2021, the mental health in Australia was nearly equal to its highest point since the launch of the Index in April 2020. Modest fluctuations were observed through May and a significant decline was recorded in June. The score recovered in July but fell in August and September.

In the final quarter of 2021, the mental health in Australia remains strained at -11.3 points, equal to the **most distressed 1%** of the pre-pandemic benchmark population.



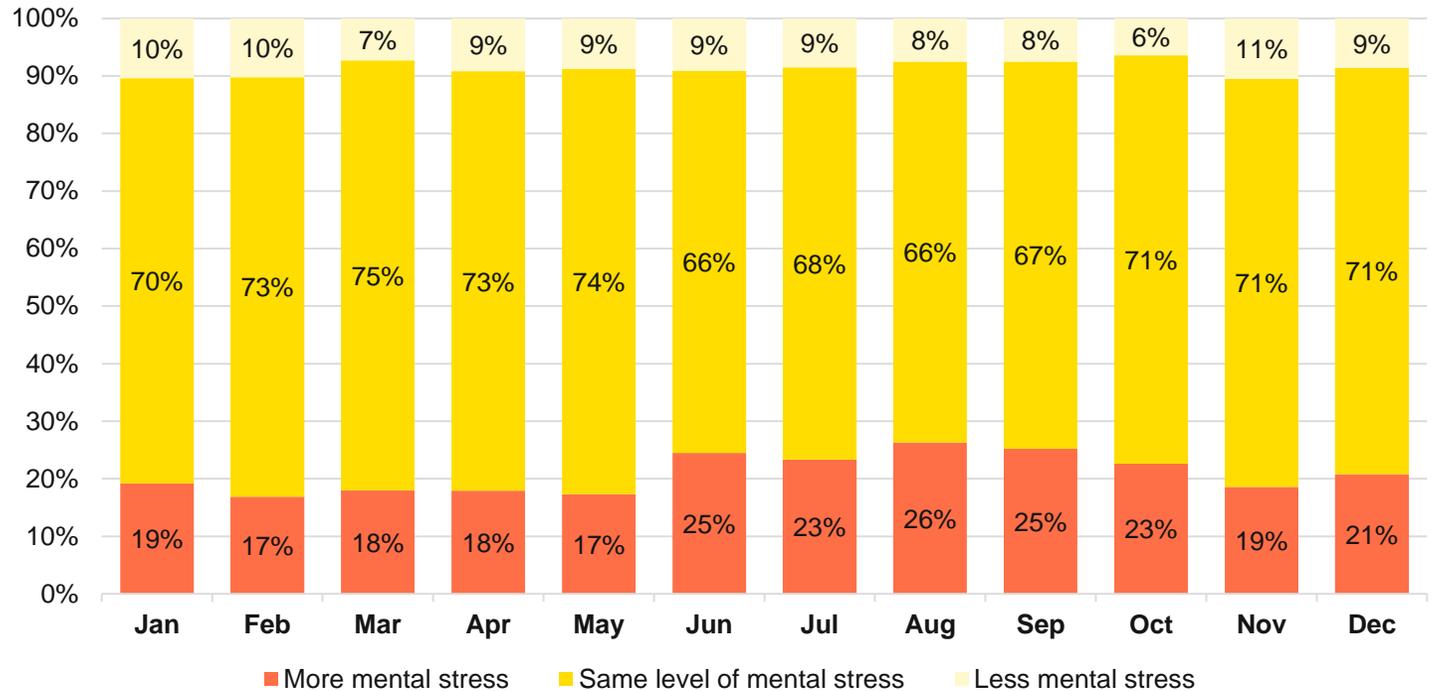
The MHI is a measure of deviation from the 2017-2019 benchmark of mental health and risk. A negative score indicates a decline in mental health compared to the benchmark period. The more negative the score, the greater the decline.

Mental stress change

The percentage of Australians experiencing more mental stress compared to the previous month fluctuated from 17% to 25% in 2021. By year-end, the percentage of those reporting more mental stress than the prior month was 21%.

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 Australians in 2021

More than half of Australians believe that their **career options** would be **limited** if they had a **mental health issue**, and their workplace was aware. (Dec)

- Half of Australians feel the need for **mental health support** and over one-third want to focus on their mental health. (Jan, Apr)
- **Mental health stigma** remains a major issue. Nearly two in five Australians would **feel negatively about themselves** if they had a mental health issue. (Feb, Dec)
- More than one in five Australian **are less willing to access mental healthcare** during the pandemic and this group has a less favourable mental health score. (Mar)
- 28% of working Australians that use alcohol have **increased their consumption** since the pandemic and this group has the least favourable mental health and isolation scores. (May)
- There is an ancillary **isolation pandemic**. Nearly one in five Australians 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 twice as likely to report **worry/anxiety** as their primary emotion than men. (Sep)
- 25% **feel in crisis** or have concerns about their ability to cope. (Oct)
- One-quarter of employed Australians report a **decline in their mental health**. (Oct)
- More than half of Australians 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 37 workdays per year. (Aug)
- Over one-third of Australians report an increase in **job stress** in 2021 compared to 2020. (Sep)
- More than one-third of employed Australians 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 Australians (28%) is the **flexibility to step away from work** to attend to personal issues. (Dec)
- More than 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



- Nearly half of managers would **feel more negatively** about themselves if they had a **mental health issue**, compared to 38% of non-managers. (Feb)
- 58% of managers perceive that there would be an **impact to their career** if their employer knew of a **mental health issue** compared to 47% of non-managers (47%). (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 more than 40% more likely than non-managers to report that the COVID-19 pandemic had a **negative impact** on their **mental health**.(Mar)
- Managers are nearly 50% more likely to report **increased job stress** than non-managers. (Sep)
- Managers are more than 40% 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 50% more likely** than non-parents to report that the COVID-19 pandemic had a **negative impact** on their **mental health**. (Mar)
- Parents are twice as likely as non-parents to report being **less willing to access mental healthcare**. (Mar)
- Parents report **more substance use** than non-parents and indicate an impact on their work and home lives. (May)
- Parents are 50% more likely than non-parents to indicate that **working from home full-time** would be their ideal work situation. (Jul)
- 60% of parents **work when feeling unwell** at least one day per week compared to 40% of non-parents. (Aug)
- Parents are **more than 70% more likely** than non-parents to be **in crisis** or to have concerns about their ability to cope. (Oct)

