



TELUS Mental Health Index.

Australia | Q1 2026

Table of contents

1. What you need to know: Q1 2026	3	3. The Mental Health Index by region	13	6. Overview of the TELUS Mental Health Index	30
2. The Mental Health Index	5	4. The Mental Health Index by industry	15	Methodology.....	30
Mental health risk	6			Calculations.....	30
Mental Health Index sub-scores.....	7	5. Spotlight	16	Additional data and analyses.....	30
Anxiety	8	The relationship between			
Isolation.....	9	MHI scores and productivity	16		
Work productivity	10	Presenteeism.....	17		
Financial risk.....	11	Employer support for wellbeing.....	18		
Mental health by gender and age	12	Barriers to mental health support	20		
Mental health by employment status.....	12	Workplace culture	23		
Emergency savings.....	12	Turnover	24		
		Adoption of AI at work.....	28		

What you need to know: Q1 2026.

A persistent three-year plateau in worker mental health is a signal for concern.

At 63.1, and despite a one-point improvement, workers' mental health has fluctuated within a notably low range.

Anxiety, isolation, and work productivity remain the most significant challenges. Key indicators from this period include:

- 34 per cent of workers have a high mental health risk; 43 per cent moderate; 22 per cent low
- Mental health sub-scores have increased from September 2025, except for optimism and general psychological health
- Anxiety has been the lowest mental health sub-score for nearly six years
- 35 per cent of workers report feeling anxious; 32 per cent feel isolated; and 28 per cent feel depressed
- 32 per cent of workers report that their mental health is negatively affecting work productivity
- 31 per cent of workers lack emergency savings to cover basic needs
- Mental health scores have improved in Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, and South Australia, but have declined in Victoria and Queensland compared to the previous period
- Managers continue to score higher than non-managers, and labourers score lower than both service industry and office workers

Younger workers disproportionately report unmet mental and physical health support needs.

At least one in four workers reports unmet needs related to mental and physical wellbeing. Workers under 40 are twice as likely as those over 50 to want better mental and physical health support.

- 29 per cent of workers want enhanced career development and skills training
- 26 per cent of workers believe their employer could better support mental health; 24 per cent of workers say the same for physical health
- 24 per cent of workers want better stress management and resilience training
- Workers wanting better mental health support **score 15 points lower** on the Mental Health Index than those who don't need additional support; these workers also **lose 47.1 days per year in productivity**, 23 more days than workers who don't require additional support
- 33 per cent of workers report no need for additional employer support; this group is older, non-managerial, and does not include parents
- Non-managers are nearly twice as likely as managers to report needing no additional support, though managers are more likely to report concern about the stigma associated with seeking help



AI adoption is growing, with outcomes varying by employer support and frequency of use.

Nearly half of workers report employer support for AI adoption, and nearly three in five report improved efficiency as a result.

- 52 per cent of workers use AI tools at least several times per month
- 58 per cent of workers who use AI report improved efficiency; the mental health score of this group is two points higher than the national average
- Managers are 50 per cent more likely than non-managers to report improved efficiency from AI tools

Cost is the most cited barrier to accessing mental health support.

Half of workers identify cost or affordability as a barrier to accessing mental health support. One in six cites long wait times or limited availability of care.

- 50 per cent of workers citing cost as a barrier **score 21 points lower** on the Mental Health Index and **lose 16 more days per year in productivity** compared to workers who report no barriers
- Workers who don't think anything will help have the lowest mental health score, and **lose more than double the productivity days** of workers facing no barriers
- Younger workers, managers, and parents are twice as likely to be concerned about stigma for seeking support
- Workers over 50 are twice as likely as those under 40 to report no barriers to support

Outcomes differ substantially based on whether workers perceive their organisation's culture as supportive of their wellbeing.

Six in 10 workers describe their organisation's culture as supportive of their wellbeing; those who don't lose 25 more days of productivity annually.

- 13 per cent of workers who feel their organisation's culture does not support their wellbeing **score 20 points lower** on the Mental Health Index and lose 25 more days per year in productivity
- 13 per cent of workers are considering leaving their jobs; this group **scores 19 points lower** on the Mental Health Index and **loses 30 more days annually in productivity** compared to workers not considering leaving
- 21 per cent of workers are uncertain about staying; they **lose 15 more days per year** and **score nearly 16 points lower** on the Mental Health Index than workers who are not considering leaving
- Higher compensation and better career opportunities are the primary drivers of turnover intention

In this report, **productivity loss** refers to the number of workdays lost per year due to physical health issues and/or emotional or mental health challenges. Some fluctuations in productivity are inevitable, as employees naturally experience varying levels of efficiency throughout their workday.

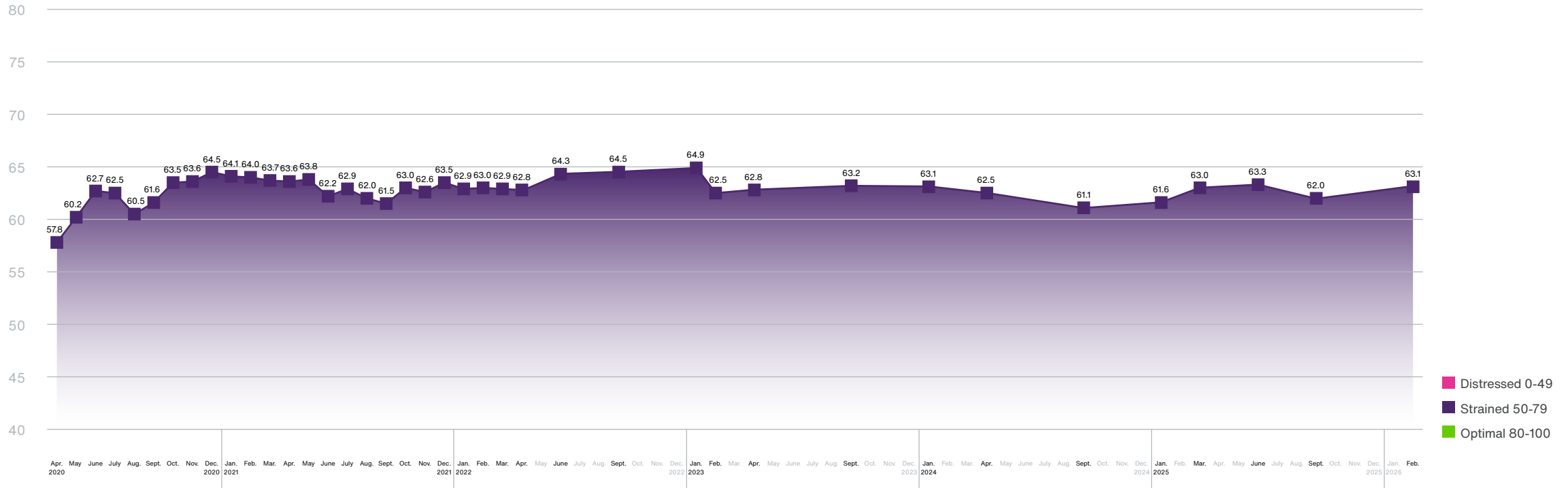


The Mental Health Index.

The overall Mental Health Index (MHI) for the first quarter of 2026 is 63.1.

The mental health of workers in Australia peaked in January 2023 and declined through September 2024. An upward trend has been observed since late 2024, with an improvement of one point from the previous period through the first quarter of 2026.

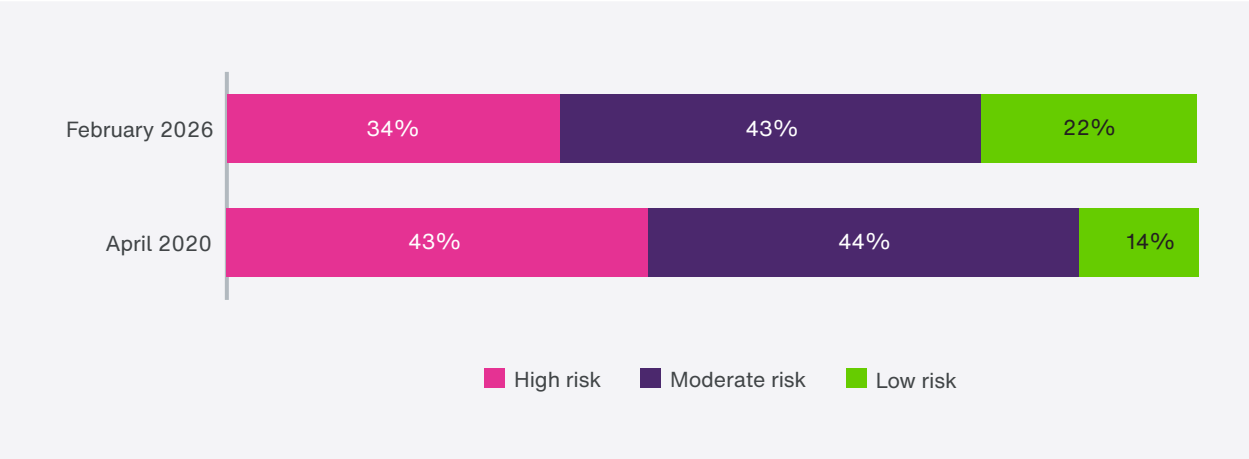
MHI Current Month February 2026	September 2025
63.1	62.0





Mental health risk.

In the first quarter of 2026, 34 per cent of workers have a high mental health risk, 43 per cent have a moderate mental health risk, and 22 per cent have a low mental health risk. Nearly six years after the launch of the Mental Health Index in April 2020, the proportion of workers in the high-risk group has declined by nine per cent.



Approximately 30 per cent of workers in the high-risk group report diagnosed anxiety or depression, seven per cent report diagnosed anxiety or depression in the moderate-risk group, and one per cent of workers in the low-risk group report diagnosed anxiety or depression.

Mental Health Index sub-scores.

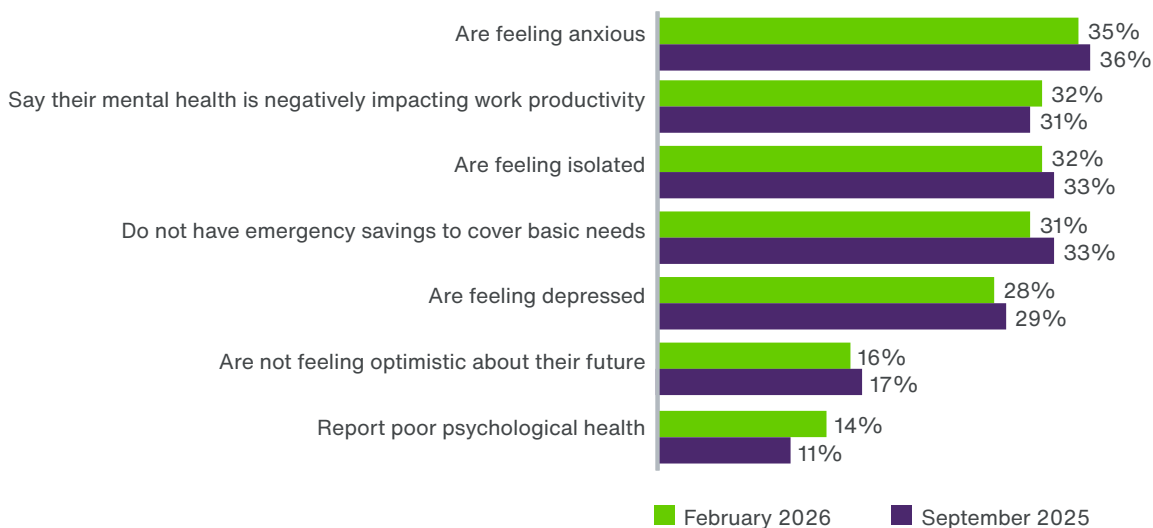
For nearly six years, anxiety (56.5) has ranked as the lowest Mental Health Index sub-score, followed by work productivity (59.8), isolation (60.0), depression (62.2), optimism (65.1), and financial risk (66.4). General psychological health (69.4) remains the highest mental health measure in the first quarter of 2026.

- All mental health sub-scores, apart from general psychological health and optimism, have increased compared to the previous period
- Financial risk and depression sub-scores have increased by two points from September 2025

More than one-third (35 per cent) of workers feel anxious, 32 per cent say their mental health is negatively impacting work productivity, 32 per cent feel isolated, 31 per cent don't have emergency savings for basic needs, 28 per cent feel depressed, 16 per cent don't feel optimistic about their future, and 14 per cent of workers cite poor psychological health.

Mental Health Index Sub-scores	February 2026	September 2025
Anxiety	56.5	54.8
Work productivity	59.8	59.4
Isolation	60.0	58.2
Depression	62.2	60.2
Optimism	65.1	65.2
Financial risk	66.4	64.3
Psychological health	69.4	69.9

Percentage at risk by MHI sub-score



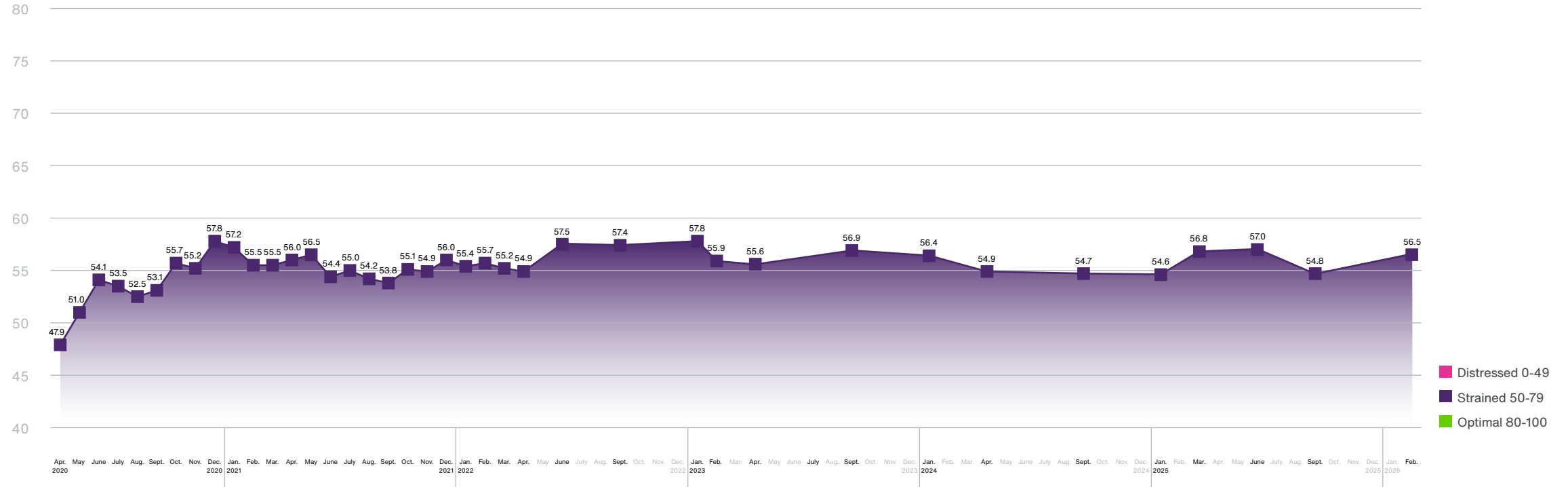
Anxiety

In the first quarter of 2026, 35 per cent of workers say they often feel unsettled and nervous.

Anxiety sub-scores have plateaued at a persistently low baseline since December 2020. In February 2026, the sub-score has nearly recovered from its September 2025 decline; however, anxiety persists as the lowest mental health sub-score for nearly six years.

Sub-score
February 2026

56.5



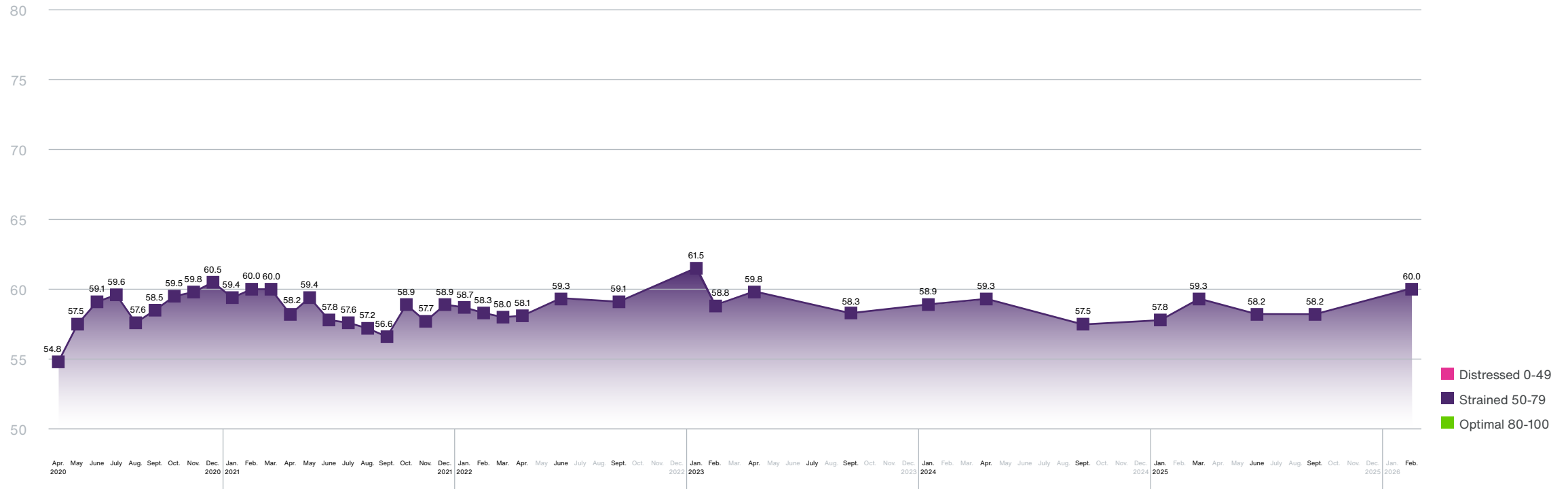
Isolation

In the first quarter of 2026, 32 per cent of workers say they often feel alone.

The isolation sub-score has fluctuated significantly since April 2020. After peaking in January 2023, isolation scores generally declined through September 2024 and have remained relatively flat through September 2025. In February 2026, the isolation score improved by nearly two points, yet it remains at a critical level.

Sub-score
February 2026

60.0



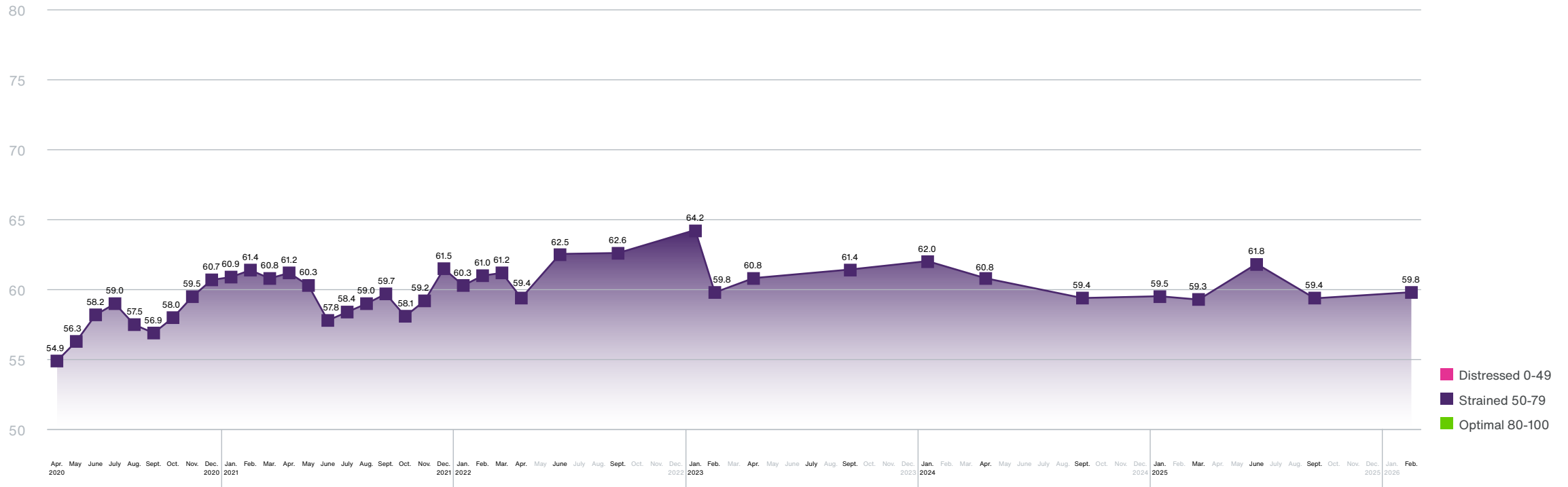
Work productivity

In the first quarter of 2026, 32 per cent of workers say their mental health is negatively impacting their work productivity and goals.

From April 2020 to January 2023, the work productivity sub-score demonstrated steady incremental improvement. After peaking in January 2023, the sub-score declined sharply and has since fluctuated at levels notably lower than those preceding the peak. In February 2026, the work productivity sub-score improved modestly; however, it remains the second-lowest sub-score, a position that has alternated with isolation for nearly six years.

Sub-score
February 2026

59.8



Financial risk

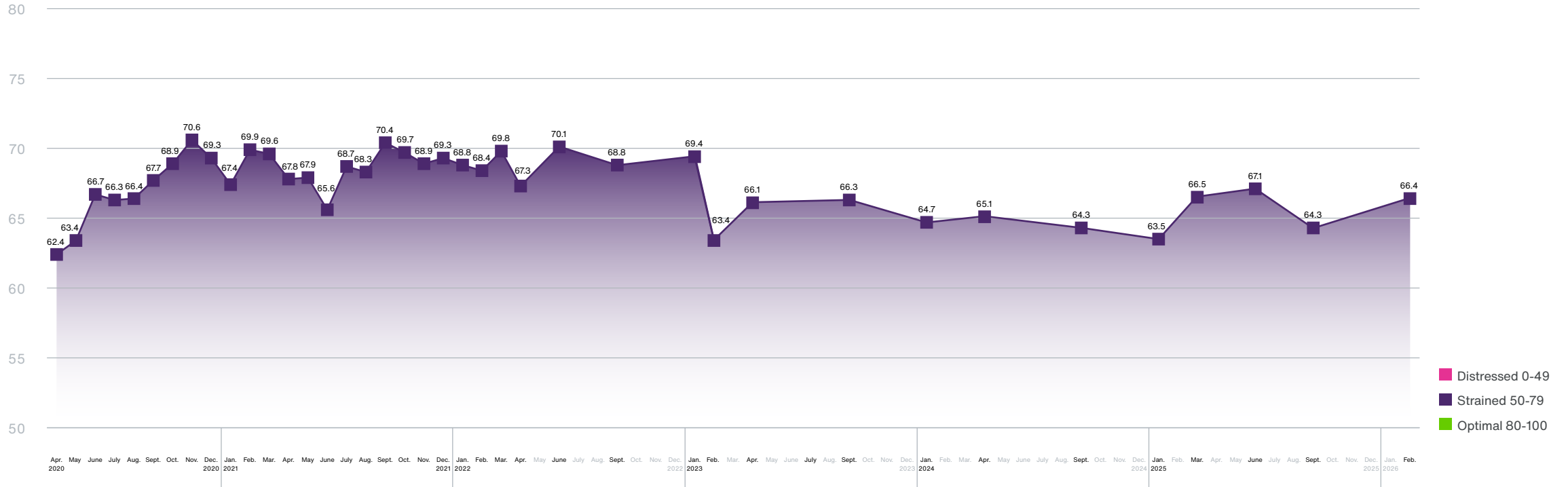
In the first quarter of 2026, 31 per cent of workers do not have emergency savings for basic needs.

The financial risk sub-score experienced significant changes from April 2020 through February 2023.

Despite a two-point improvement in February 2026, the score remains at levels consistent with pandemic-era lows.

Sub-score
February 2026

66.4



Mental health by gender and age.

- Since the launch of the MHI, women have had a significantly lower mental health score than men. In February 2026, the mental health score of women is 60.9 compared to 65.5 for men
- Since April 2020, mental health scores have improved with age

Mental health by employment status.

- Overall, four per cent of respondents are unemployed¹ and seven per cent report reduced hours or reduced salary
- Workers reporting reduced salary compared to the previous month have the lowest mental health score (41.6), followed by workers reporting fewer hours than the last month (54.4), respondents not currently employed (62.0), and workers with no change to salary or hours (64.1)
- Managers have a higher mental health score (63.6) than non-managers (62.7)
- Labourers have a lower mental health score (58.5) than service industry (62.1) and office workers (65.0)
- Respondents working for companies with 1,001-5,000 employees have the highest mental health score (65.1)
- Self-employed/sole proprietors have the lowest mental health score (60.8)



Emergency savings

- Workers without emergency savings continue to experience a lower mental health score (48.2) than the overall group (63.1). Workers with emergency savings have a mental health score of 69.8

¹ MHI respondents who have been employed in the past six months are included in the poll.

The Mental Health Index by region.

In the first quarter of 2026, mental health scores in Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, and South Australia have improved, while scores in Victoria and Queensland have declined compared to September 2025.

- The highest mental health score and the greatest improvement are in Western Australia, up nearly five points from September 2025
- The lowest mental health score is in Victoria (62.4), down modestly from September 2025

State	February 2026	September 2025	Change
Western Australia	65.4	60.5	4.9
Australian Capital Territory (A.C.T.)	62.5	58.6	3.9
New South Wales (excluding A.C.T.)	63.4	61.7	1.7
South Australia	64.4	63.6	0.8
Victoria	62.4	62.5	-0.1
Queensland	62.9	64.1	-1.2

Numbers highlighted in pink are the lowest/worst scores in the group.
Numbers highlighted in green are the highest/best scores in the group.



Employment status	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	64.1	63.9
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	54.4	53.2
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	41.6	41.5
Not currently employed	62.0	53.1

Age group	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
Age 20-29	60.2	56.9
Age 30-39	59.8	58.5
Age 40-49	59.9	59.7
Age 50-59	64.5	65.2
Age 60-69	70.0	67.1

Number of children	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
No children in household	63.9	62.3
1 child	61.6	61.4
2 children	64.2	63.2
3 children or more	56.9	56.0

Gender	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
Men	65.5	64.0
Women	60.9	60.1

Household income/annum	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
<\$30K	55.9	48.3
\$30K to <\$60K	55.5	55.0
\$60K to <\$100K	62.7	60.9
\$100K to <\$150K	63.3	63.9
\$150K or more	67.7	67.7

Employer size	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
Self-employed/sole proprietor	60.8	58.5
2-50 employees	62.3	61.5
51-100 employees	64.8	61.3
101-500 employees	62.9	63.4
501-1,000 employees	63.5	63.1
1,001-5,000 employees	65.1	63.7
5,001-10,000 employees	63.5	62.9
More than 10,000 employees	62.3	62.3

Manager	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
Manager	63.6	63.3
Non-manager	62.7	61.1

Work environment	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
Labour	58.5	59.1
Office/desk	65.0	64.4
Service	62.1	59.9

Numbers highlighted in pink are the lowest/worst scores in the group.
Numbers highlighted in green are the highest/best scores in the group.

The Mental Health Index by industry.

Workers in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation have the lowest mental health score (59.0), followed by workers in Health Care and Social Assistance (60.1) and Retail Trade (60.2).

Workers in Transportation and Warehousing (69.0), Public Administration (68.6), and Educational Services (67.4) have the highest mental health scores in the first quarter of 2026.



Industry	February 2026	September 2025	Change
Transportation and Warehousing	69.0	64.3	4.7
Retail Trade	60.2	56.9	3.3
Construction	63.1	60.6	2.5
Administrative and Support Services	61.4	59.0	2.4
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	67.2	65.7	1.5
Wholesale Trade	64.0	63.0	1.1
Educational Services	67.4	66.5	1.0
Health Care and Social Assistance	60.1	59.5	0.6
Manufacturing	65.7	65.5	0.3
Other	62.8	63.0	-0.2
Finance and Insurance	62.3	63.2	-0.9
Technology	67.0	68.0	-1.1
Food Services	55.2	59.4	-4.2
Public Administration	68.6	73.9	-5.3
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	59.0	65.8	-6.9

Spotlight

The relationship between MHI scores and productivity.

Productivity losses are calculated using an assessment of four key metrics:

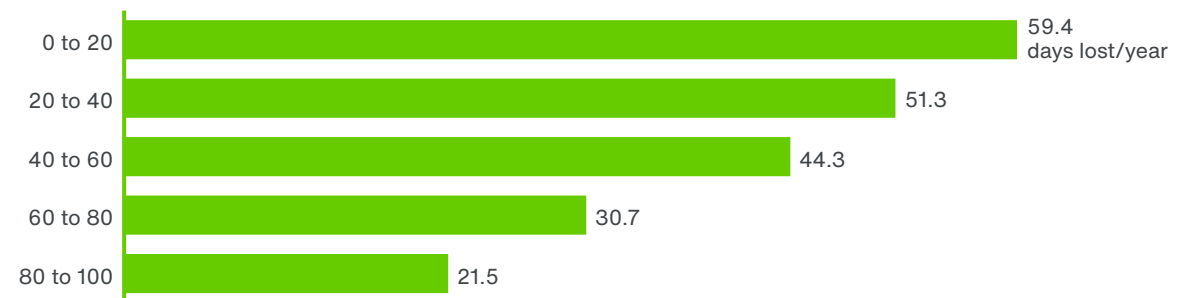
1. Work effort when feeling well
2. Absenteeism when feeling unwell
3. Instances of working when feeling unwell (commonly referred to as Presenteeism)
4. Work effort when feeling unwell

Productivity loss is reported as a percentage of working time lost and as the number of workdays lost per year, based on a standard 240-day work year.

- Mental health scores are strongly correlated with productivity. Workers with lower mental health scores experience greater productivity loss, while those with higher scores experience less productivity loss
- Nearly three in 10 (29 per cent) workers have a mental health score of 50 or lower. The productivity loss of this group is twice the number of lost workdays as 22 per cent of workers with a mental health score of 80 or higher



Productivity loss in working days per year by MHI score

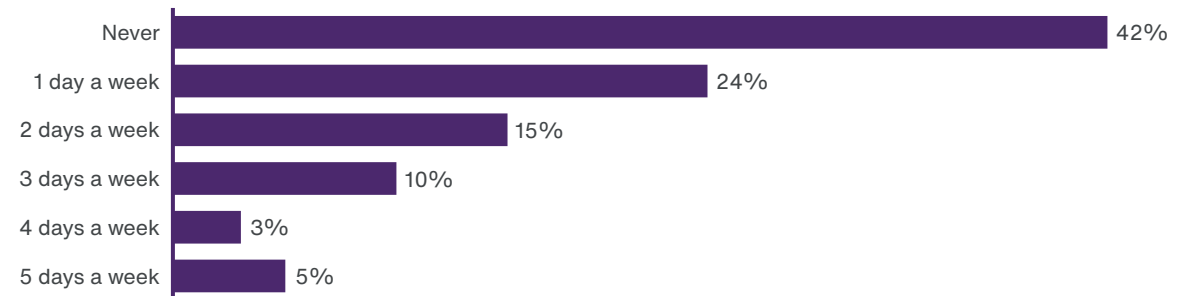


Presenteeism

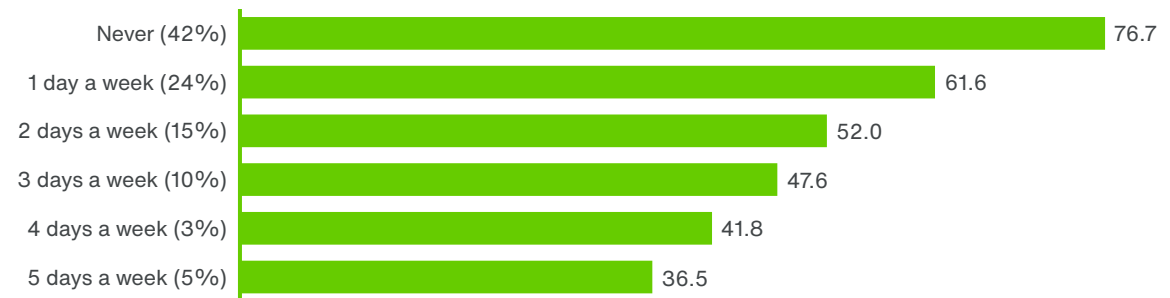
Presenteeism refers to productivity loss when someone is working while unwell. Nearly three in five workers report doing their jobs at least one day per week while feeling unwell.

- 58 per cent of employees report working while feeling unwell at least one day per week; this group has lower mental health scores and experiences greater productivity losses compared to workers who never work while unwell
- The highest mental health score (76.7) is among 42 per cent of workers who never work while unwell, almost 14 points higher than the national average (63.1)
- Workers over 50 are twice as likely as workers under 40 to report never working while unwell
- Non-parents are 30 per cent more likely than parents to report never working while unwell

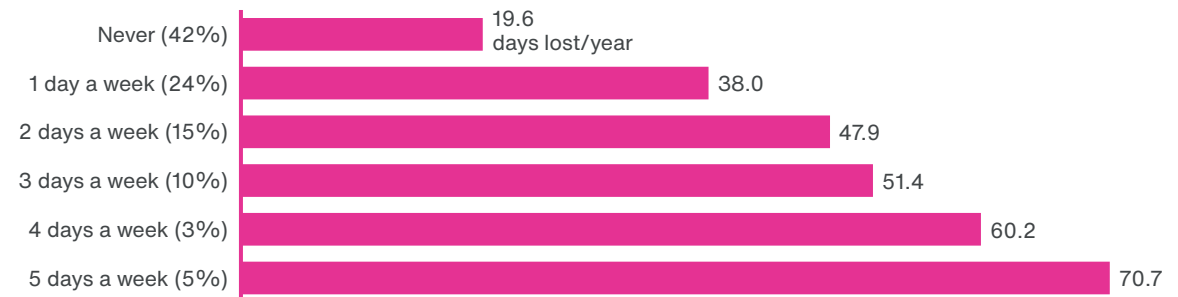
In a typical week, how often do you do your job feeling mentally or physically unwell?



MHI score by “In a typical week, how often do you do your job feeling mentally or physically unwell?”



Productivity loss by “In a typical week, how often do you do your job feeling mentally or physically unwell?”



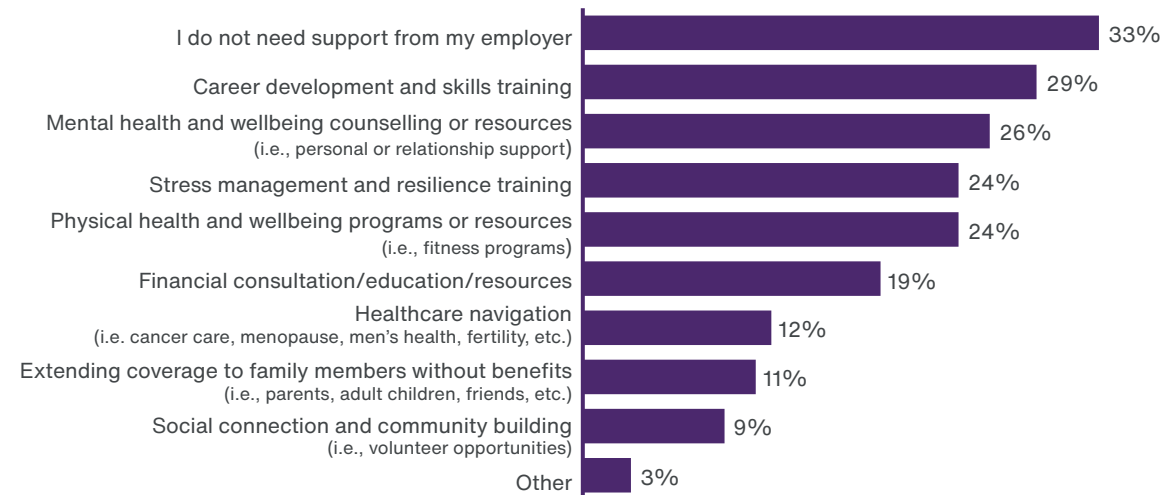
Employer support for wellbeing.

At least one in four workers wants better support for their mental and physical health.

- Nearly one in three (29 per cent) workers want career development and skills training, 26 per cent want better mental health support, 24 per cent say their employer could provide better support for their physical health; 24 per cent want stress management and resilience training, and 19 per cent want better support with financial resources, education or consultation
- Workers under 40 are twice as likely as workers over 50 to want better support for their mental and physical health
- Workers over 50 are nearly three times more likely than workers under 40 to say they don't need support from their employer

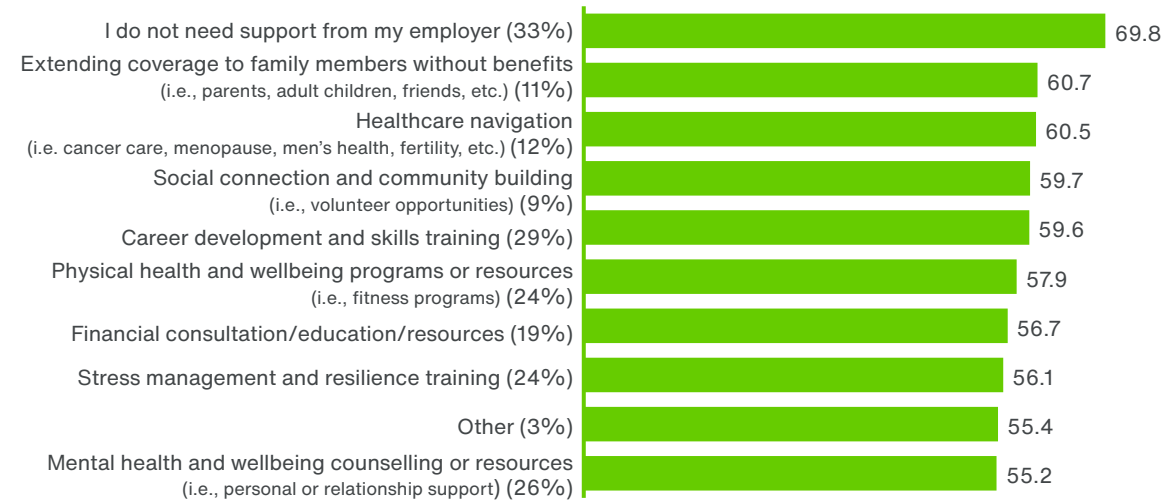


Are there any areas where you feel your employer could provide better support?

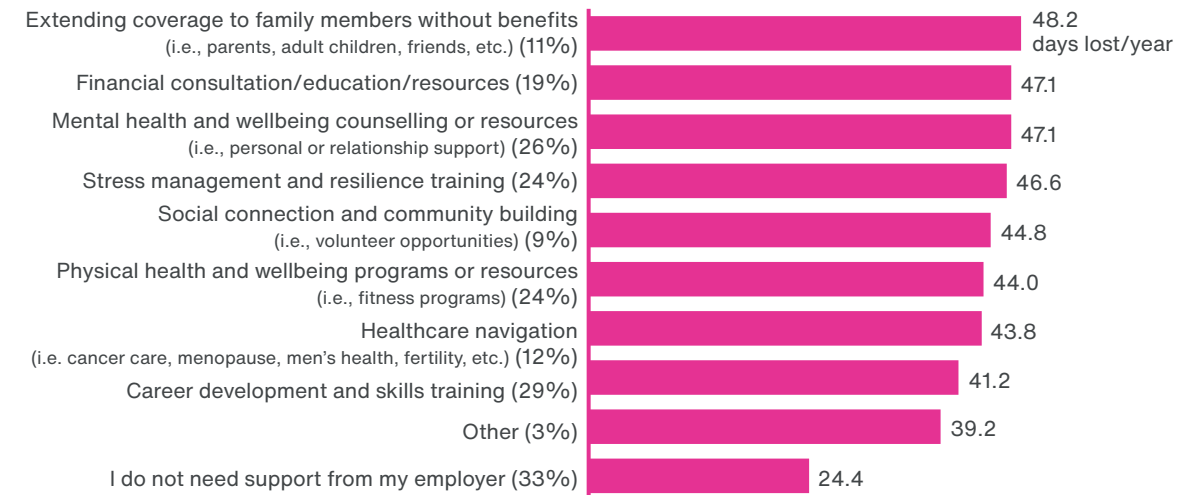


- The lowest mental health score (55.2) is among 26 per cent of workers wanting better support for their mental health, nearly 15 points lower than workers not needing support from their employer (69.8), and eight points lower than the national average (63.1)
- Workers wanting better support for their mental health have an annual productivity loss of 47.1 days, nearly 23 days more compared to those requiring no support (24.4 working days per year)
- Non-managers are nearly twice as likely as managers to report they don't need support from their employer
- Non-parents are 60 per cent more likely than parents to say they don't need support from their employer

MHI score by “Are there any areas where you feel your employer could provide better support?”



Productivity loss by “Are there any areas where you feel your employer could provide better support?”

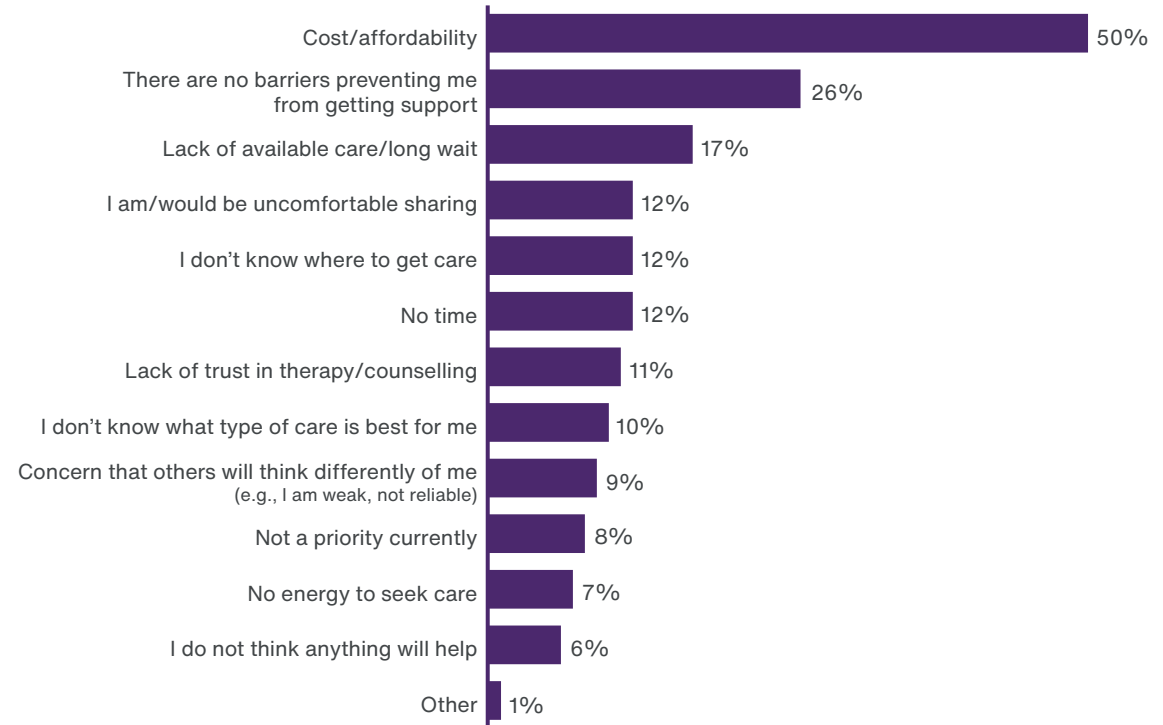


Barriers to mental health support.

Cost/affordability and lack of available care/long wait times prevent workers from getting mental health support.

- Half (50 per cent) of workers say cost/affordability is preventing them from getting mental health support, 17 per cent say it's a lack of available care or a long wait, 12 per cent would be uncomfortable sharing, 12 per cent don't know where to get care, and 12 per cent don't have the time to seek support
- Managers, parents, and workers under 40 are twice as likely to be concerned that others will think differently of them if they seek mental health support
- Workers over 50 are twice as likely as workers under 40 to report no barriers to support
- Non-parents are 50 per cent more likely than parents to report no barriers to support

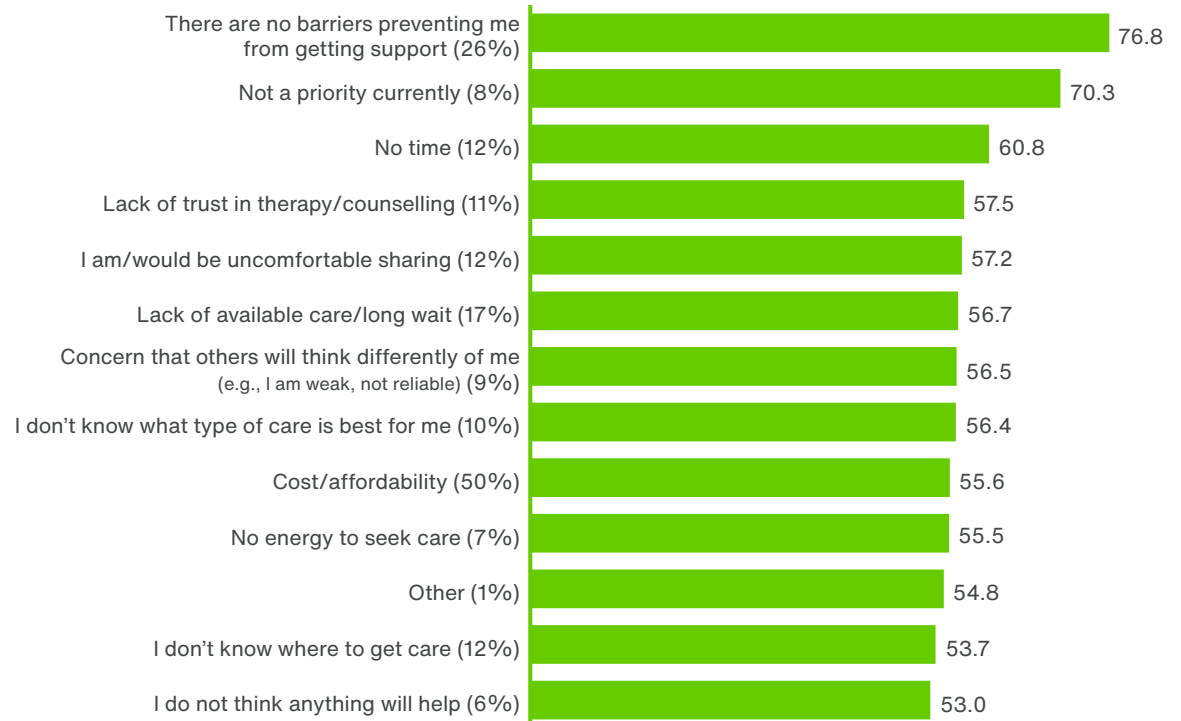
What would prevent you from getting mental health support if you needed it?



- The highest mental health score (76.8) is among 26 per cent of workers reporting no barriers to mental health support, nearly 14 points higher than the national average (63.1)
- The lowest mental health score (53.0) is among six per cent of workers who don't think support would help, nearly 24 points lower than workers reporting no barriers to support (76.8) and 10 points lower than the national average (63.1)



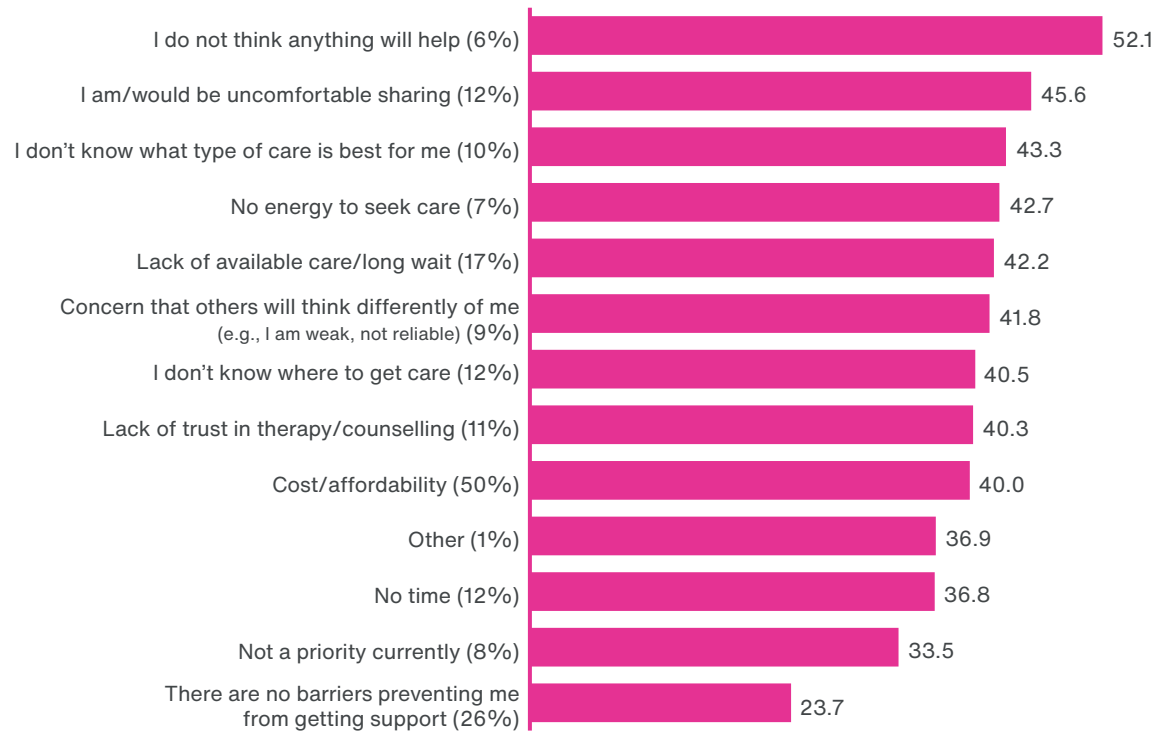
MHI score by “What would prevent you from getting mental health support if you needed it?”



- Workers reporting no barriers to support have an annual productivity loss of 23.7 days, 29 days fewer compared to those who don't think anything will help (52.1 working days per year)



Productivity loss by “What would prevent you from getting mental health support if you needed it?”

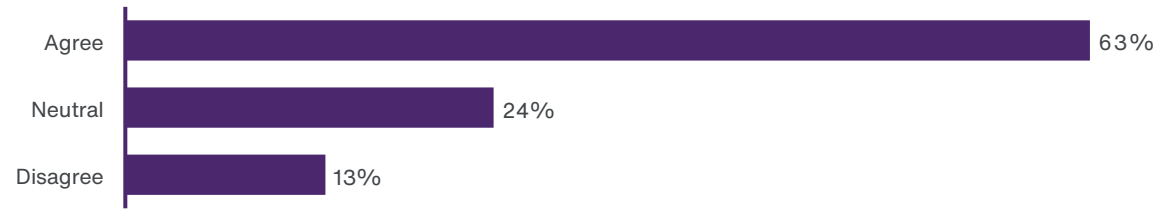


Workplace culture

Only six in 10 workers believe their organisation’s culture supports their wellbeing.

- More than six in 10 (63 per cent) perceive their workplace culture as supportive of their personal wellbeing; this group has the highest mental health score (68.9), nearly six points higher than the national average (63.1)
- More than one in 10 (13 per cent) don’t perceive their workplace culture as supportive of their personal wellbeing; this group has the lowest mental health score (49.0), 20 points lower than workers who perceive their workplace culture as supportive (68.9) and 14 points lower than the national average (63.1)
- Workers who perceive their workplace culture as supportive of their personal wellbeing have an annual productivity loss of 29.6 days; 25 days fewer compared to workers who perceive it as unsupportive (54.7 working days per year)

The workplace culture at my organisation supports my personal wellbeing



MHI score by “The workplace culture at my organisation supports my personal wellbeing”



Productivity loss by “The workplace culture at my organisation supports my personal wellbeing”



Turnover

More than one-third of workers are considering leaving their jobs or are uncertain about staying.

- More than two-thirds (66 per cent) of workers are not thinking about leaving their jobs; this group has the highest mental health score (68.9), nearly six points higher than the national average (63.1)
- Almost one in seven (13 per cent) workers are thinking about leaving their jobs; this group has the lowest mental health score (50.2), nearly 19 points lower than workers who are not thinking of leaving their jobs (68.9), and 13 points lower than the national average (63.1)
- Workers not considering leaving their jobs have an annual productivity loss of 28.5 days, a difference of 30 days compared to workers considering a change (58.6 working days per year)

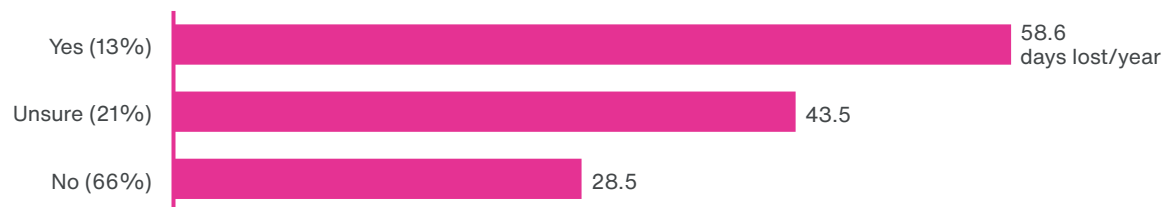
Are you thinking of leaving your job?



MHI score by “Are you thinking of leaving your job?”

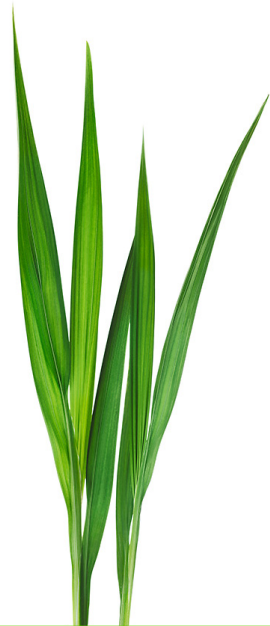


Productivity loss by “Are you thinking of leaving your job?”

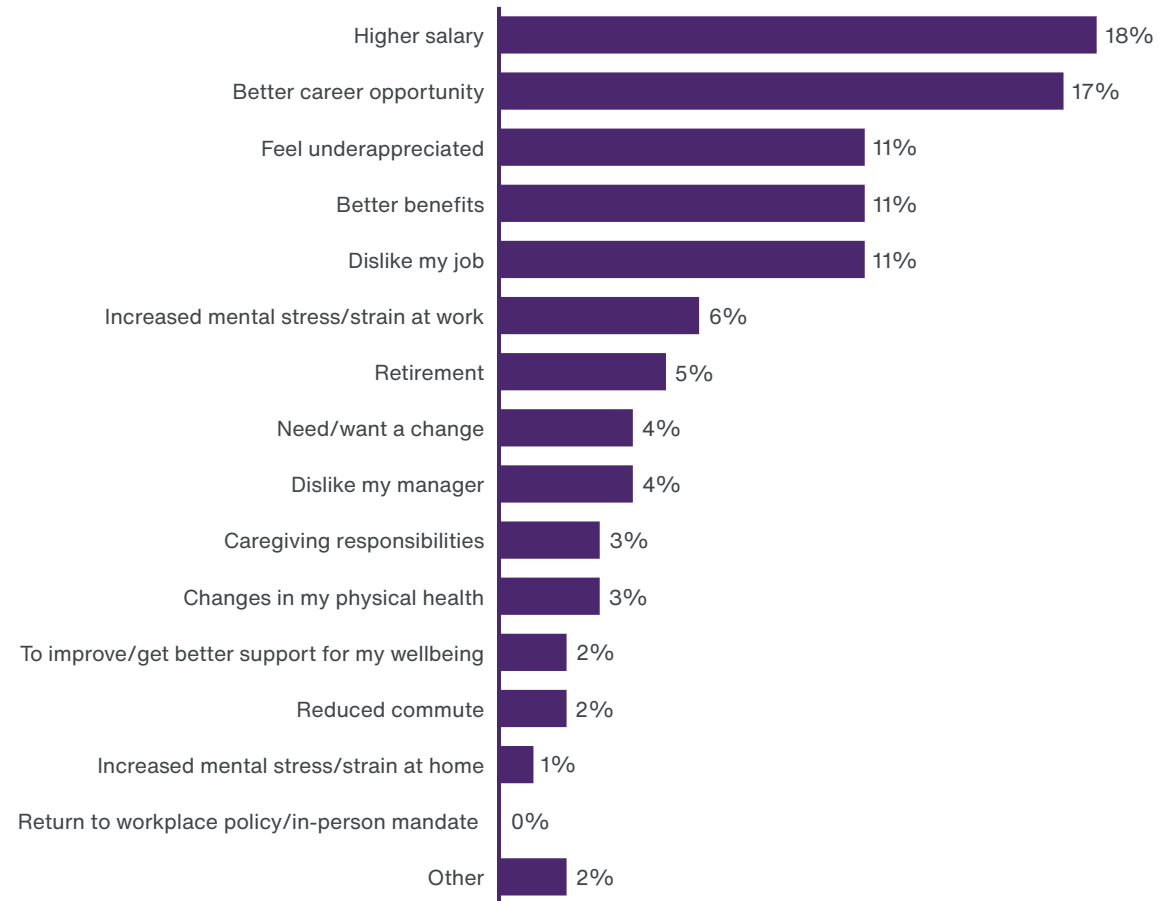


High salaries and better career opportunities are the primary drivers of turnover intention.

- Nearly one in five (18 per cent) workers who are thinking of leaving say a higher salary is the primary reason for considering leaving their jobs, 17 per cent say it's for better career opportunities, 11 per cent say they feel underappreciated, 11 per cent say better benefits are the reason, and 11 per cent dislike their job
- Workers under 40, parents, and managers are more likely to report better career opportunities and better benefits as the reasons for considering leaving their jobs



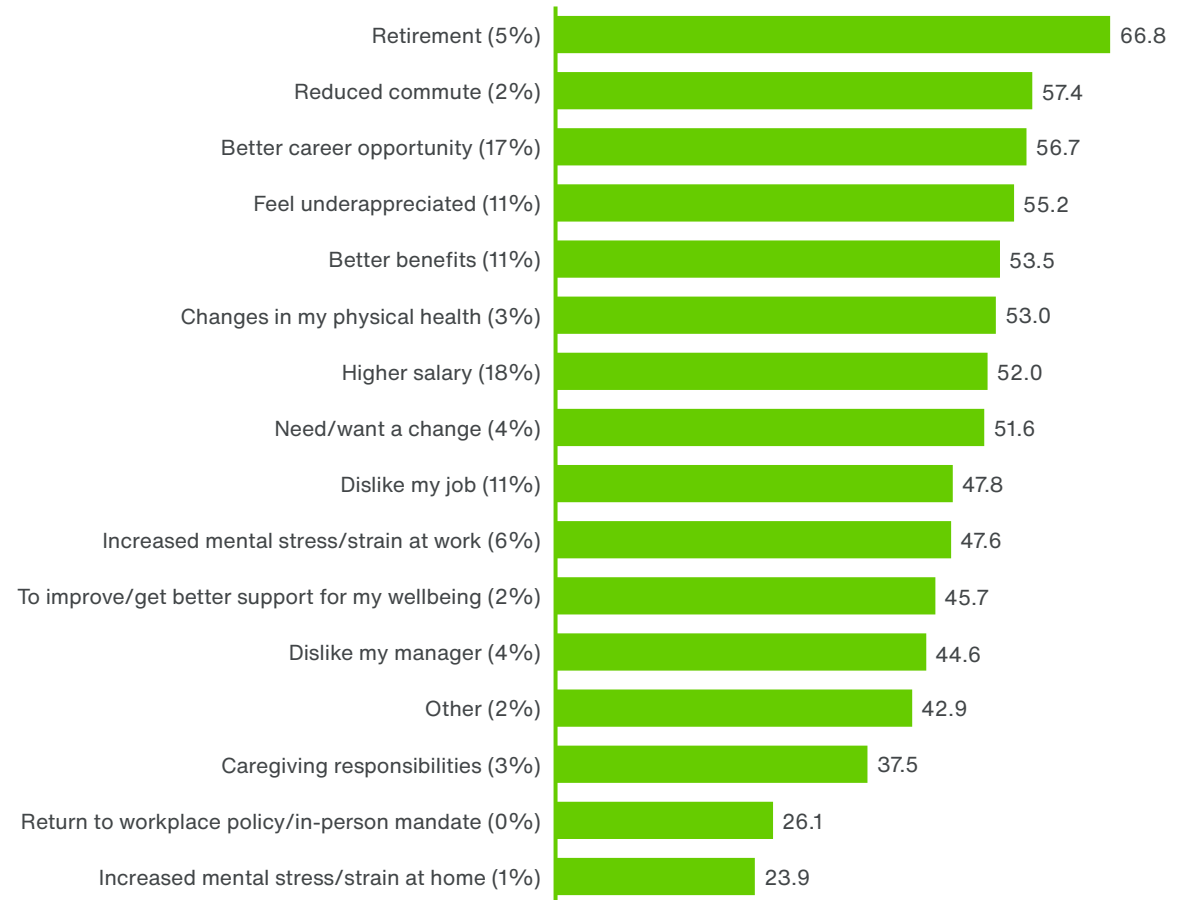
What is the primary reason you are thinking of leaving your job?



- The mental health score of 11 per cent of workers considering leaving their jobs for better benefits (53.5) is nearly 10 points lower than the national average (63.1); this group also experiences a productivity loss of 44.3 days annually

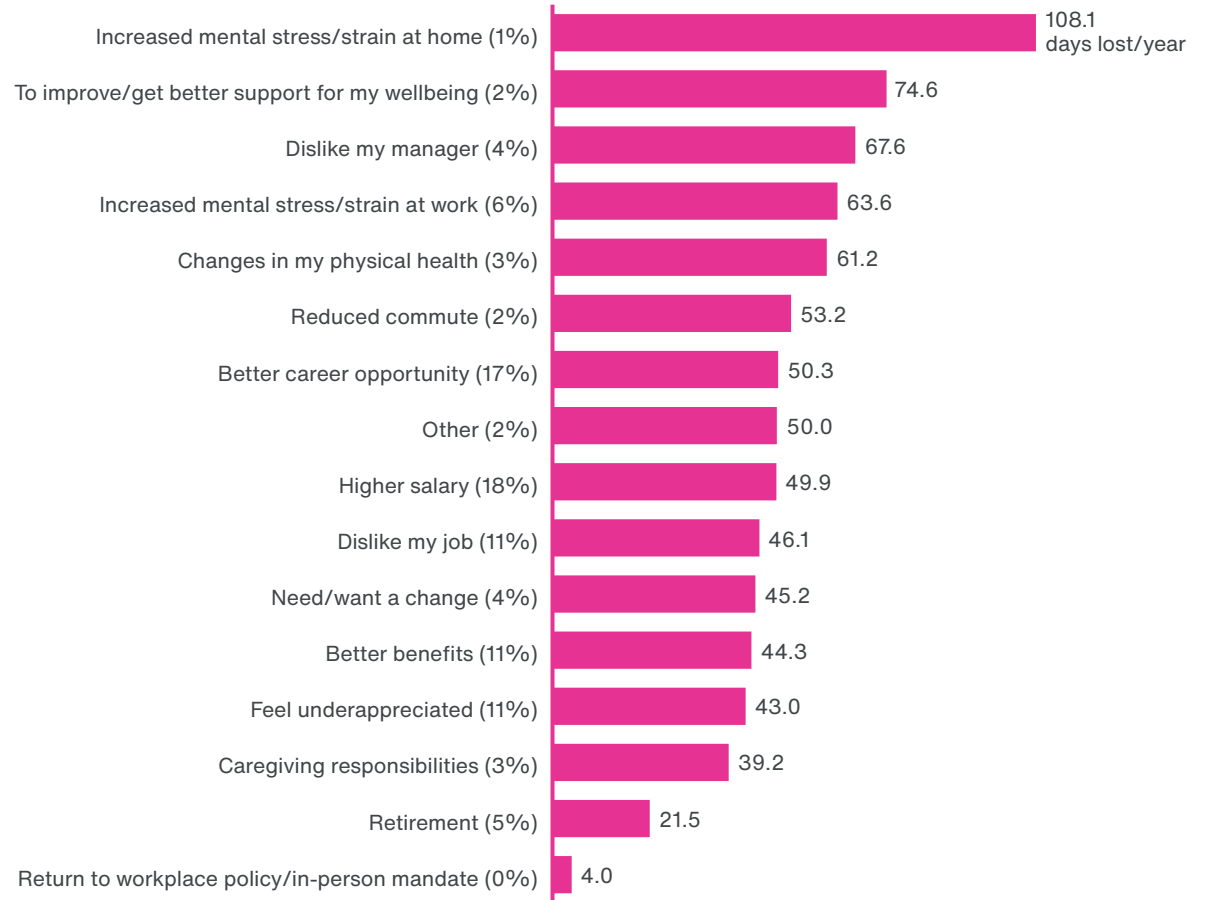


MHI score by “What is the primary reason you are thinking of leaving your job?”





Productivity loss by “What is the primary reason you are thinking of leaving your job?”



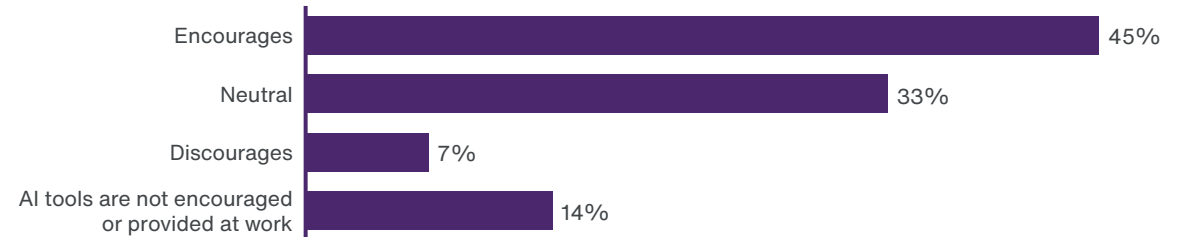
Adoption of AI at work.

Nearly half of workers are encouraged to use AI tools in their work.

- Almost half (45 per cent) of workers report that their employer encourages AI use; this group has the highest mental health score (65.0), two points higher than the national average (63.1)
- The lowest mental health score (61.3) is among 33 per cent of workers reporting their employer is neutral on the use of AI tools in their work, nearly four points lower than workers whose employers encourage AI tools (65.0) and nearly two points lower than the national average (63.1)



To what extent does your employer support or encourage the use of AI tools in your work?



MHI score by “To what extent does your employer support or encourage the use of AI tools in your work?”

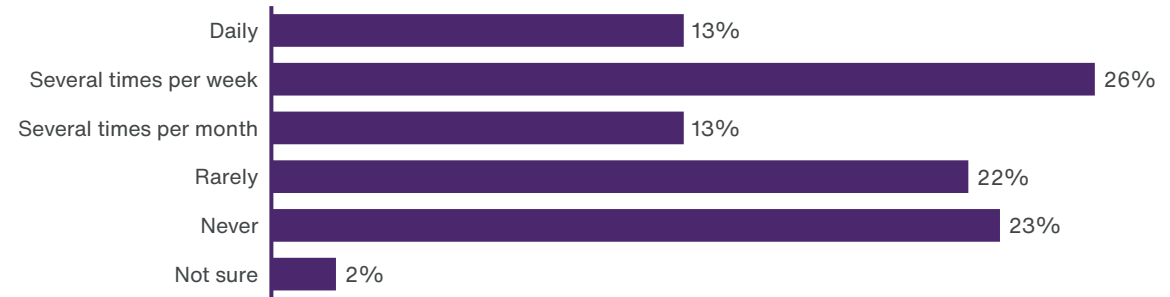


Among workers who use AI tools or technologies at work, nearly three in five report improved efficiency.

- Nearly two in five (39 per cent) workers use AI in their work at least several times per week; a further 13 per cent use AI in their work several times per month
- Nearly three in five (58 per cent) workers using AI report improved efficiency; this group has a mental health score (65.0) two points higher than the national average (63.1)
- Managers are 50 per cent more likely than non-managers to report that AI tools/technologies have improved their efficiency at work



How often do you use AI tools or technologies in your current job?



How would you describe the impact of AI tools/technologies on your efficiency at work?



MHI score by “How would you describe the impact of AI tools/technologies on your efficiency at work?”



Overview of the TELUS Mental Health Index.

The mental health and wellbeing of a population are essential to overall health and work productivity. The Mental Health Index measures the current mental health status of employed adults. Increases and decreases in the MHI are intended to predict cost and productivity risks and inform the need for investment in mental health support by businesses and governments.

The Mental Health Index report has two parts:

1. The overall Mental Health Index (MHI).
2. A spotlight section that reflects the specific impact of current issues in the community.

Methodology

Data for this report is collected through an online survey of 1,000 people who live in Australia and are currently employed or who were employed within the last six months. Participants are selected to represent the age, gender, industry, and geographic distribution in Australia. Respondents are asked to consider the previous two weeks when answering each question. Data for the current report were collected between February 25 and March 9, 2026.

Calculations

To create the Mental Health Index, a response scoring system is applied to turn individual responses into point values. Higher point values are associated with better mental health and less mental health risk. The sum of scores is divided by the total number of possible points to generate a score out of 100. The raw score is the mathematical mean of the individual scores. The distribution of scores is defined according to the following scale:

Distressed 0 - 49 **Strained** 50-79 **Optimal** 80 - 100

Additional data and analyses.

Demographic breakdowns of sub-scores and specific cross-correlational and custom analyses are available upon request. Benchmarking against the national results or any subgroup is available upon request. Contact MHI@telushealth.com





www.telushealth.com

