



TELUS Mental Health Index.

New Zealand | Q1 2026

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What you need to know: Q1 2026.

Despite a modest recovery, the mental health of workers in New Zealand remains below healthy levels.

Mental health among workers in New Zealand has reached a high of 62.0, up by 1.4 points from September 2025.

Despite this increase, the score remains notably in the strained range, with anxiety and isolation remaining the most significant challenges. Key indicators from this period include:

- 37 per cent of workers have a high mental health risk; 45 per cent moderate; 18 per cent low
- All mental health sub-scores have improved or are unchanged compared to the previous period
- Anxiety has been the lowest mental health sub-score for three years
- 38 per cent of workers report feeling anxious; 33 per cent feel isolated; 28 per cent report feeling depressed
- 35 per cent of workers lack emergency savings to cover basic needs
- 31 per cent of workers report that their mental health is negatively affecting work productivity
- Mental health scores in Canterbury, Manawatū-Whanganui and Taranaki, Marlborough, Nelson, Tasman, and West Coast have declined while scores in other regions have improved compared to September 2025
- 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.

More than one in five workers reports unmet needs related to mental or physical well-being support. Workers under 40 are more than twice as likely as those over 50 to want better mental health support and are 90 per cent more likely to want better physical health support.

- 25 per cent of workers believe their employer could better support their physical health; 22 per cent say the same for mental health
- Workers wanting better mental health support **score nearly 19 points lower** on the Mental Health Index than those who don't need additional support; these workers also **lose 50.4 days per year in productivity**, 21 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 50 per cent more likely than 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 use frequency.

More than two in five workers report employer support for AI adoption, and nearly three in five report improved efficiency as a result.

- 44 per cent of workers are encouraged to use AI tools in their work
- 50 per cent of workers use AI tools at least several times per month
- 59 per cent of workers who use AI report improved efficiency
- The lowest mental health score is among seven per cent of workers whose employers actively discourage AI use, nearly eight points lower than workers whose employers encourage it
- Managers are more likely than non-managers to report both improved efficiency from AI tools and employer encouragement of AI use

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

More than half of workers identify cost or affordability as a barrier to accessing mental health support. Nearly one in five say they don't know where to get support or would be uncomfortable sharing.

- 52 per cent of workers citing cost as a barrier **score nearly 19 points lower** on the Mental Health Index and **lose 22 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
- Workers over 50 are nearly three times as likely as those under 40 to report facing no barriers to support

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

Only six in 10 workers describe their organisation's culture as supportive of their wellbeing; those who **don't lose nearly 18 more days of productivity annually.**

- Workers who feel their organisation's culture doesn't support their wellbeing **score more than 14 points lower** on the Mental Health Index and **lose 18 more days per year in productivity**
- 17 per cent of workers are considering leaving their jobs; this group **scores more than 17 points lower** on the Mental Health Index and **loses 21 more days annually in productivity** compared to workers not considering leaving
- 22 per cent of workers are uncertain about staying; they **lose 17 more days per year** and **score nearly 13 points lower** on the Mental Health Index than workers not considering leaving
- Better career opportunities, higher compensation, and improved benefits 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.

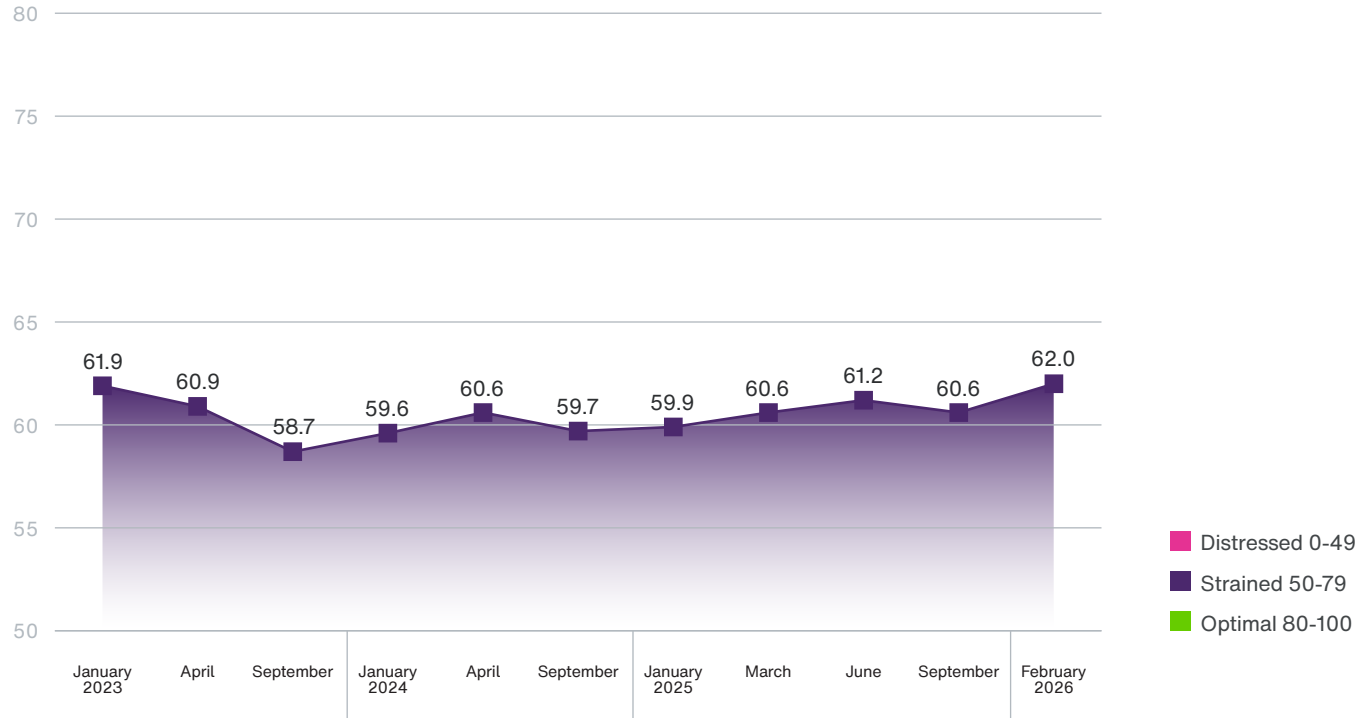


The Mental Health Index.

The overall Mental Health Index (MHI) for the first quarter of 2026 is 62.0.

The mental health score of workers in New Zealand has peaked in the first quarter of 2026; despite this high, the score remains notably in the strained range.

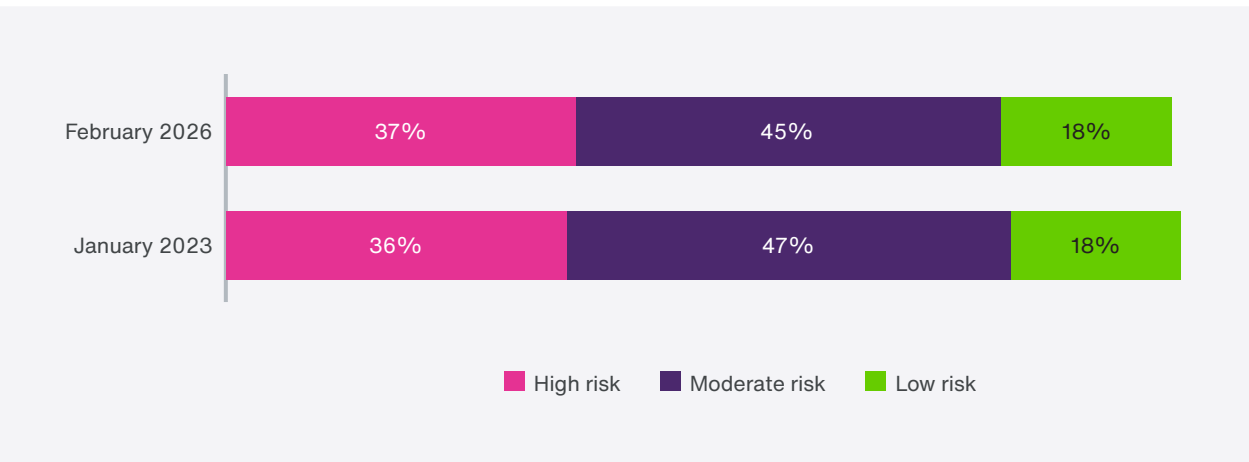
MHI Current Month February 2026	September 2025
62.0	60.6





Mental health risk.

In the first quarter of 2026, 37 per cent of workers have a high mental health risk, 45 per cent have a moderate mental health risk, and 18 per cent have a low mental health risk. More than three years after the launch of the Mental Health Index in January 2023, the proportion of workers in the high-risk group has increased by one 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.

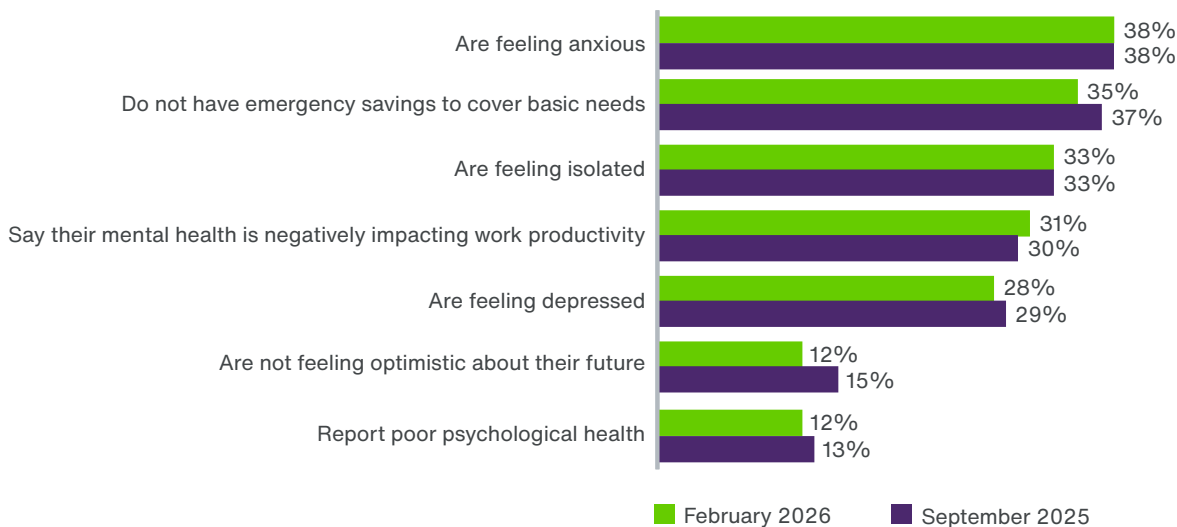
For three years, anxiety (53.5) has ranked as the lowest Mental Health Index sub-score, followed by isolation (58.8), depression (59.8), work productivity (60.1), financial risk (61.6), and optimism (67.3). General psychological health (70.8) remains the highest mental health sub-score in the first quarter of 2026.

- All mental health sub-scores have increased or are unchanged compared to the previous period
- The anxiety sub-score has been the least favourable mental health measure for three years

Nearly two in five (38 per cent) workers feel anxious, 35 per cent don't have emergency savings for basic needs, 33 per cent feel isolated, 31 per cent say their mental health is negatively impacting work productivity, 28 per cent feel depressed, 12 per cent don't feel optimistic about their future, and 12 per cent of workers cite poor psychological health.

Mental Health Index Sub-scores	February 2026	September 2025
Anxiety	53.5	52.4
Isolation	58.8	57.8
Depression	59.8	58.6
Work productivity	60.1	60.1
Financial risk	61.6	60.1
Optimism	67.3	65.4
Psychological health	70.8	69.1

Percentage at risk by MHI sub-score



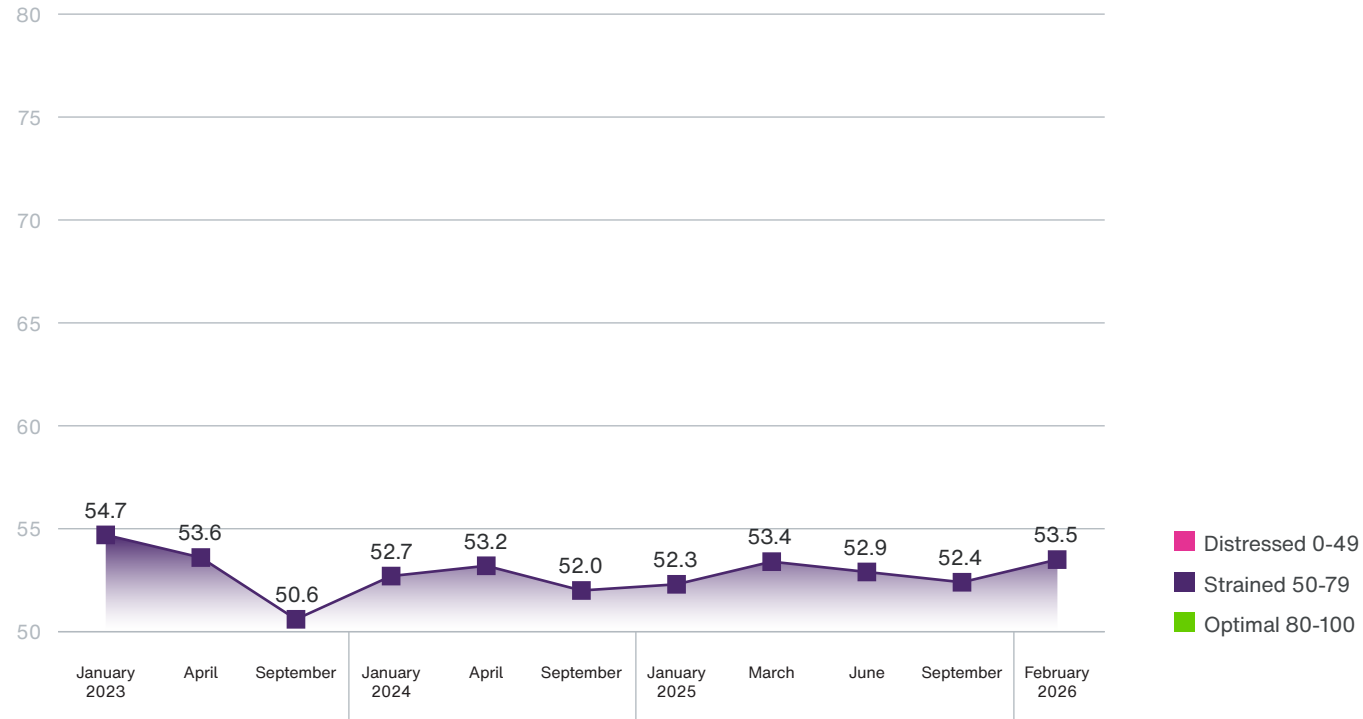
Anxiety

In the first quarter of 2026, 38 per cent of workers say they often feel unsettled and nervous.

Anxiety sub-scores have varied since the launch of the MHI in January 2023. Following a period of relative stability from January 2024 to September 2025, the anxiety score increased by one point in the first quarter of 2026, yet remains the lowest mental health sub-score for three years.

Sub-score
February 2026

53.5



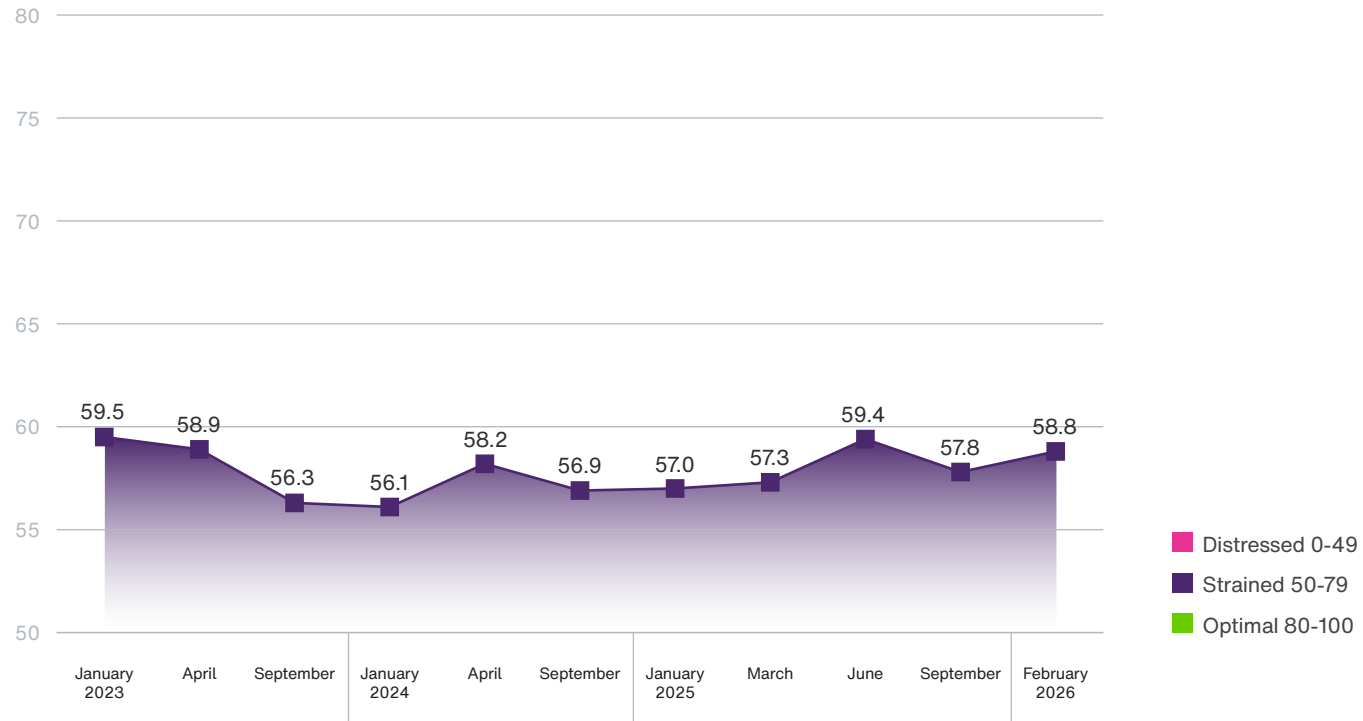
Isolation

In the first quarter of 2026, 33 per cent of workers say they often feel alone.

From January 2023 to January 2024, the isolation sub-score declined. After a brief rebound in April 2024, the sub-score declined in September and stabilised through March 2025. In June 2025, the isolation sub-score improved by more than two points, approaching its highest level, before falling in the next period. In the first quarter of 2026, isolation improved by one point, making it the second-lowest mental health score.

Sub-score
February 2026

58.8



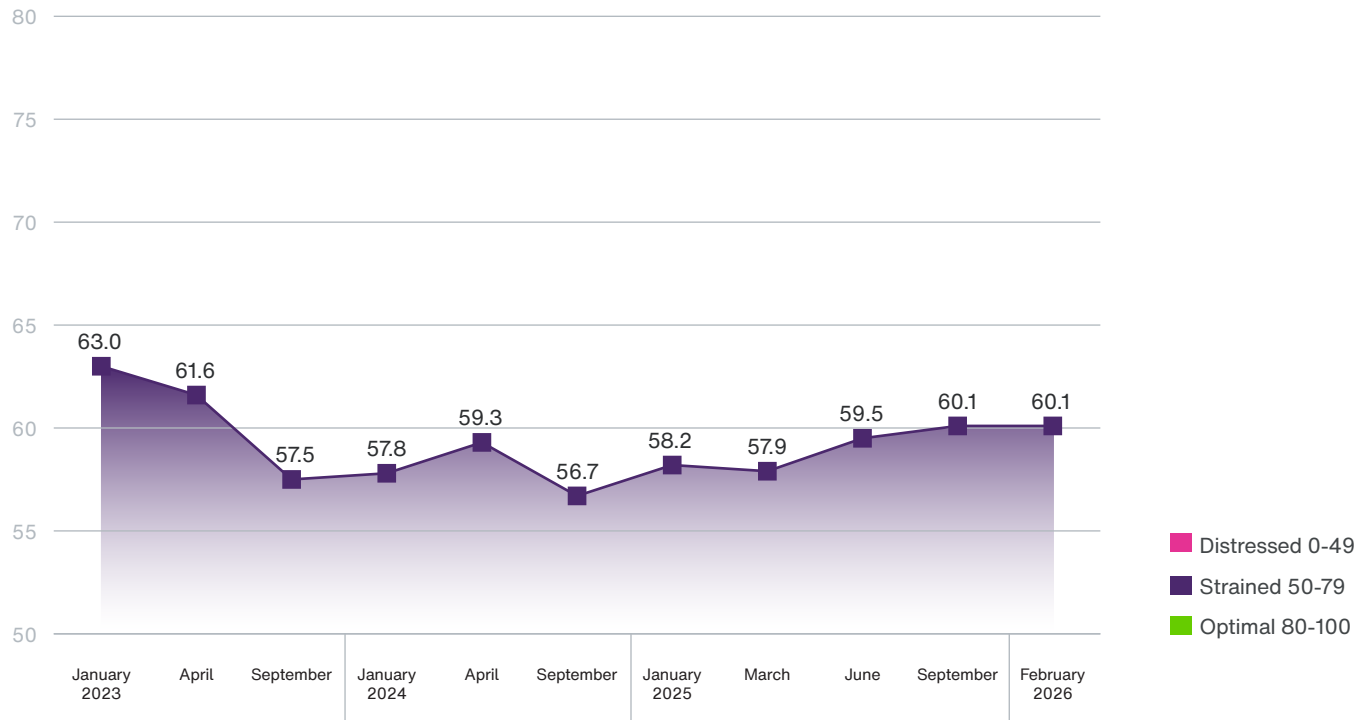
Work productivity

In the first quarter of 2026, 31 per cent of workers say their mental health is negatively affecting their productivity at work.

Work productivity has generally declined since the Index's launch in January 2023. After falling to its lowest point in September 2024, the work productivity score improved incrementally through 2025, suggesting that the adverse effect of mental health on work productivity has lessened. There is no change in the score in the first quarter of 2026, indicating a plateau for nearly three consecutive periods.

Sub-score
February 2026

60.1



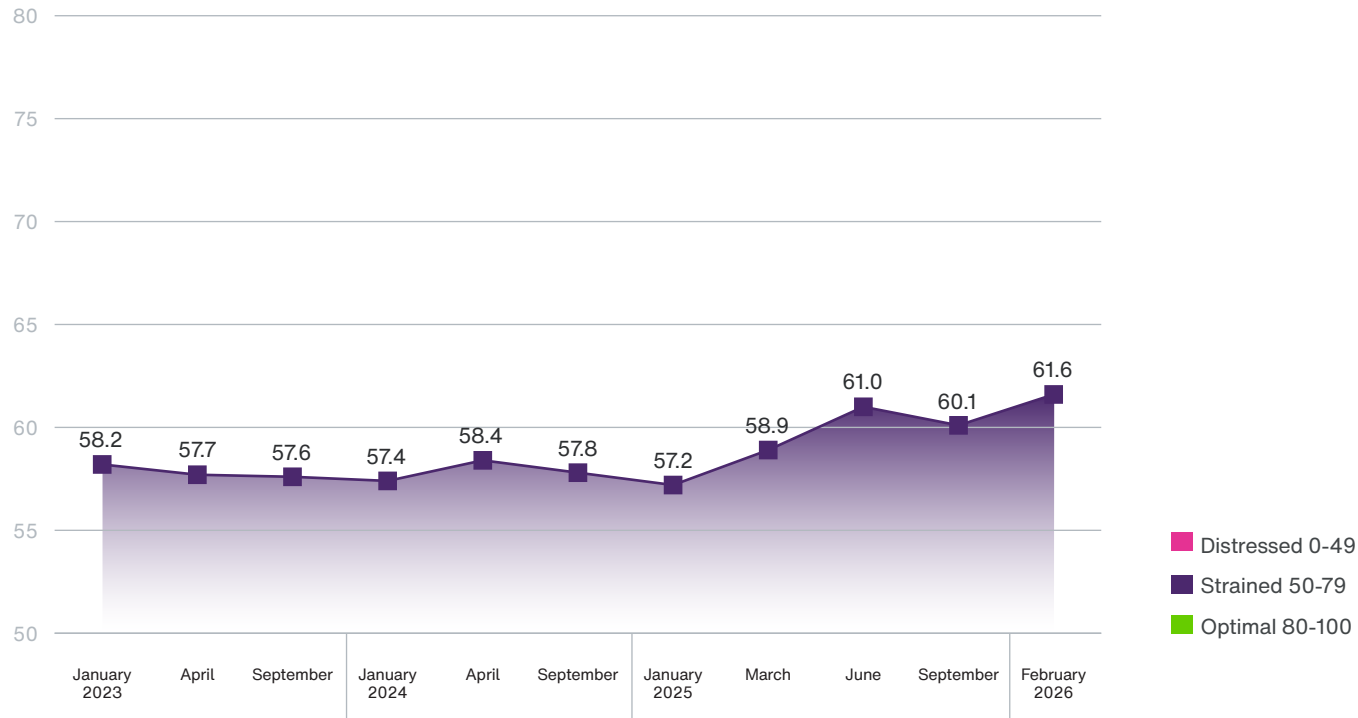
Financial risk

In the first quarter of 2026, 35 per cent of workers don't have emergency savings to cover their basic needs.

The financial risk score declined modestly from January 2023 to January 2024, improved in April 2024, and declined through January 2025. The score improved by nearly four points through June 2025, lost one point in September 2025, then recovered, reaching its highest point in February 2026. Despite this notable improvement, more than one-third of workers lack emergency savings.

Sub-score
February 2026

61.6



Mental health by gender and age.

- Since the launch of the MHI, women have had lower mental health scores than men. In February 2026, the mental health score for women is 59.7, compared with 64.2 for men
- Since January 2023, mental health scores have improved with age
- Differences in mental health scores between workers with and without minor children are evident. Workers with at least one child have a lower score (58.7) than workers without children (64.3)

Mental health by employment status.

- Overall, five per cent of respondents are unemployed¹ and 11 per cent report reduced hours or reduced salary
- Workers reporting reduced salary compared to the previous month have the lowest mental health score (49.8), followed by respondents not currently employed (54.0), workers reporting fewer hours than the last month (55.2), and workers with no change to salary or hours (63.3)
- Labourers have a lower mental health score (57.2) than office workers (62.1) and service industry workers (65.2)
- Managers have a lower mental health score (60.6) than non-managers (62.9)
- Respondents working for companies with 2-50 employees have the highest mental health score (63.8)
- Respondents working for companies with 51-100 employees have the lowest mental health score (58.7)



Emergency savings

- Workers without emergency savings continue to experience a lower mental health score (50.5) than the overall group (62.0). Workers with emergency savings have an average mental health score of 68.2

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 Canterbury, Manawatū-Whanganui and Taranaki, Marlborough, Nelson, Tasman, and West Coast have declined while scores in other regions have improved compared to September 2025.

- The greatest decline is in Marlborough, Nelson, Tasman, and West Coast, down 4.2 points from the previous period
- Despite a significant 8.4-point increase, the region of Northland has the lowest mental health score (58.5)
- The highest mental health score is in Gisborne and Hawke’s Bay (68.2), up 5.8 points from September 2025

Region	February 2026	September 2025	Change
Northland	58.5	50.1	8.4
Bay of Plenty	60.5	53.1	7.4
Gisborne and Hawke’s Bay	68.2	62.4	5.8
Wellington	63.5	58.3	5.2
Waikato	64.4	62.9	1.5
Auckland	61.4	61.0	0.4
Otago and Southland	60.6	60.5	0.1
Canterbury	62.6	62.9	-0.3
Manawatū-Whanganui and Taranaki	59.4	59.7	-0.3
Marlborough, Nelson, Tasman, and West Coast	60.2	64.4	-4.2

N vs S Island	February 2026	September 2025	Change
North Island	62.0	59.9	2.1
South Island	61.8	62.7	-0.9

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

Employment status	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	63.3	61.7
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	55.2	54.3
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	49.8	54.3
Not currently employed	54.0	53.9

Age group	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
Age 20-29	56.3	58.0
Age 30-39	56.9	56.0
Age 40-49	59.8	62.1
Age 50-59	69.5	65.4
Age 60-69	74.3	69.2

Number of children	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
No children in household	64.3	61.8
1 child	56.7	58.6
2 children	60.8	59.1
3 children or more	58.3	60.0

Gender	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
Men	64.2	62.0
Women	59.7	59.4

Household income/annum	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
<\$30K	56.2	50.0
\$30K to <\$60K	58.1	57.1
\$60K to <\$100K	58.3	56.6
\$100K to <\$150K	64.3	62.8
\$150K or more	67.4	67.1

Employer size	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
Self-employed/sole proprietor	61.3	60.7
2-50 employees	63.8	60.3
51-100 employees	58.7	61.1
101-500 employees	61.3	59.8
501-1,000 employees	62.2	59.1
1,001-5,000 employees	62.6	61.8
5,001-10,000 employees	62.6	60.8
More than 10,000 employees	63.0	66.1

Manager	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
Manager	60.6	60.9
Non-manager	62.9	60.5

Work environment	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2025
Labour	57.2	56.7
Office/desk	62.1	61.1
Service	65.2	62.4

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 Accommodation have the lowest mental health score (50.7), followed by workers in Information and Cultural Industries (54.8), and Media and Telecommunications (55.9).

Workers in Educational Services (71.3), Construction (68.3), and Health Care and Social Assistance (65.5) have the highest mental health scores in the first quarter of 2026.



Industry	February 2026	September 2025	Change
Other services (except Public Administration)	64.9	44.1	20.8
Educational Services	71.3	61.6	9.7
Construction	68.3	59.6	8.7
Food Services	60.9	53.1	7.8
Full-time post-secondary student	57.1	50.1	7.0
Finance and Insurance	65.1	62.1	3.0
Media and Telecommunications	55.9	53.0	2.8
Other	60.5	58.0	2.5
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	57.0	55.3	1.7
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	64.2	63.4	0.8
Wholesale Trade	64.3	63.9	0.4
Health Care and Social Assistance	65.5	65.4	0.1
Manufacturing	61.6	61.9	-0.3
Administrative and Support Services	56.6	57.1	-0.5
Public Administration	61.3	61.8	-0.5
Retail Trade	58.6	59.6	-1.0
Technology	57.7	59.3	-1.7
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	63.6	65.7	-2.0
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	56.7	58.8	-2.1
Management of Companies and Enterprises	62.2	65.2	-3.0
Transportation and Warehousing	59.4	62.7	-3.3
Information and Cultural Industries	54.8	63.2	-8.4
Accommodation	50.7	64.7	-14.0

Spotlight

The relationship between MHI scores and productivity.

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

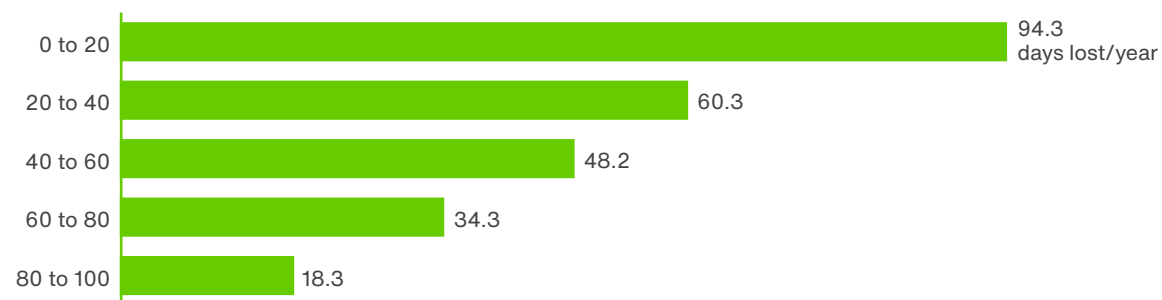
1. Work effort when feeling well
2. Absenteeism when feeling unwell
3. Instances of working when feeling unwell (commonly referred to as Presenteeism)
4. Work effort when feeling unwell

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
- Three in 10 (30 per cent) workers have a mental health score of 50 or lower. The productivity loss of this group is at least two and a half times the number of lost workdays as 18 per cent of workers with a mental health score of 80 or higher



Productivity loss in working days per year by MHI score

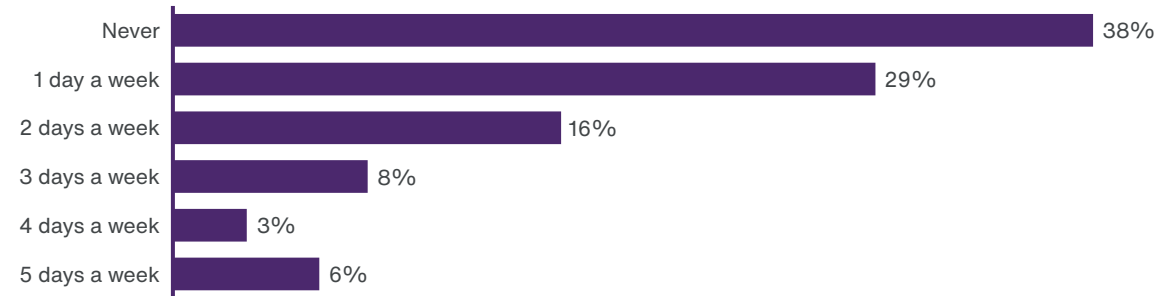


Presenteeism

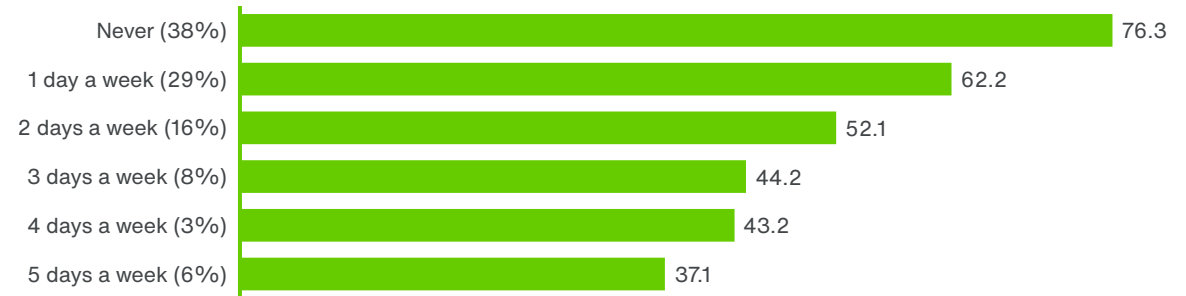
Presenteeism refers to productivity loss when someone is working while unwell. More than six in 10 workers report doing their jobs at least one day per week while feeling unwell.

- 62 per cent of employees report working while feeling unwell at least one day per week; this group has significantly lower mental health scores and experiences greater productivity losses compared to workers who never work while unwell
- The highest mental health score (76.3) is among 38 per cent of workers who never work while unwell, more than 14 points higher than the national average (62.0)
- Workers over 50 are more than twice as likely as workers under 40 to report never working while unwell
- Non-parents are 40 per cent more likely than parents to report never working while unwell

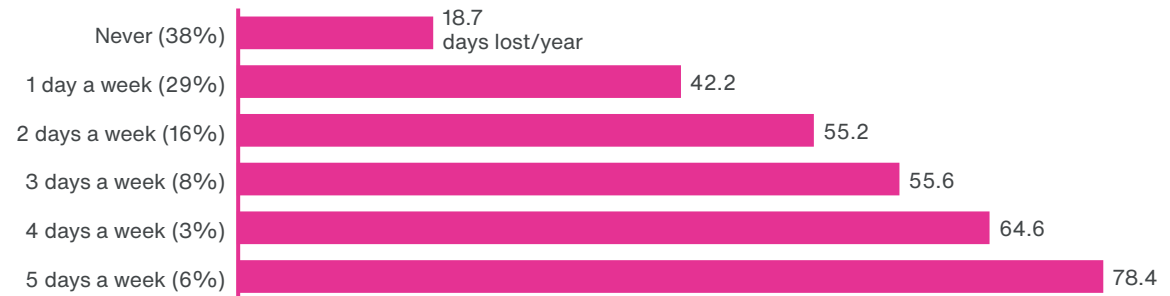
In a typical week, how often do you do your job feeling mentally or physically unwell?



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?”



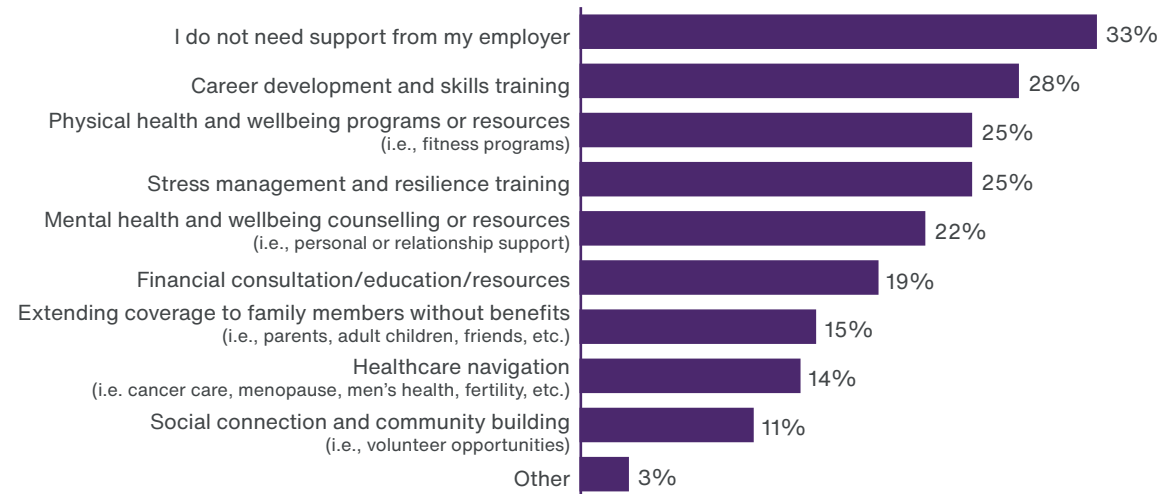
Employer support for wellbeing.

More than one in five want better support for their mental and physical health.

- Nearly three in 10 (28 per cent) workers want their employer to provide better career development and skills training; 25 per cent want better support for their physical health, 25 per cent want stress management and resilience training, 22 per cent want better mental health support, and 19 per cent want better support with financial resources, education or consultation
- Workers under 40 are more than twice as likely as workers over 50 to want better support for their mental health
- Workers under 40 are 90 per cent more likely than workers over 50 to want better support for their physical health

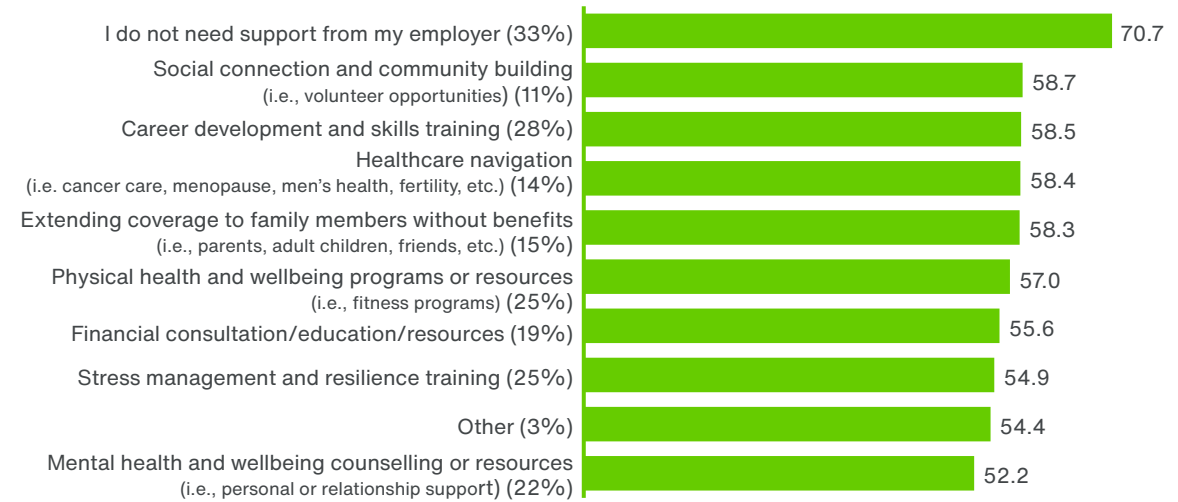


Are there any areas where you feel your employer could provide better support?

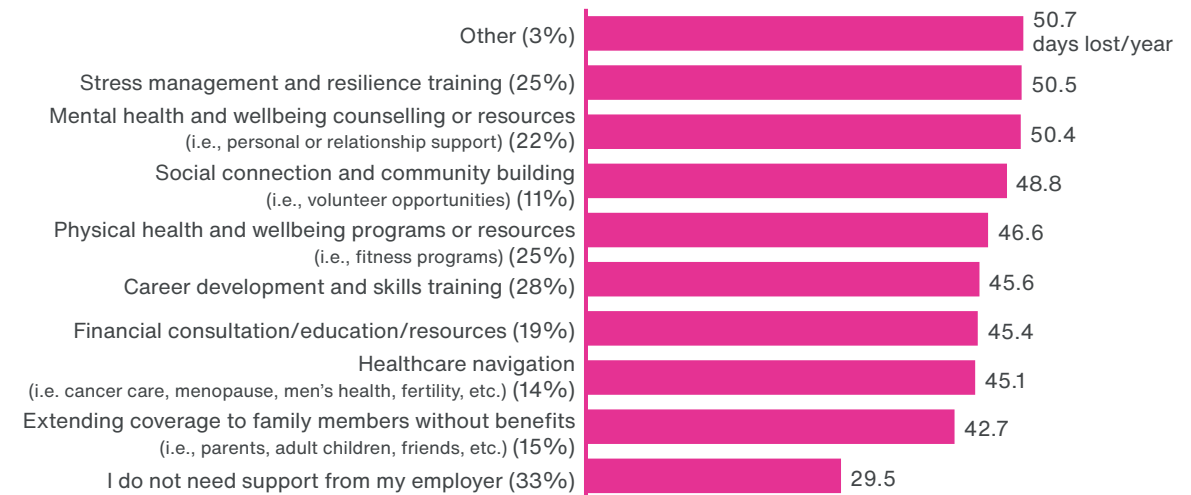


- The lowest mental health score (52.2) is among 22 per cent of workers wanting better support for their mental health, nearly 19 points lower than workers not needing support from their employer (70.7), and 10 points lower than the national average (62.0)
- Workers wanting better support for their mental health have an annual productivity loss of 50.4 days, 21 days more compared to those requiring no support (29.5 working days per year)
- Workers over 50 are nearly three times more likely than workers under 40 to say they don't need support from their employer
- Non-managers and non-parents are 50 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?”

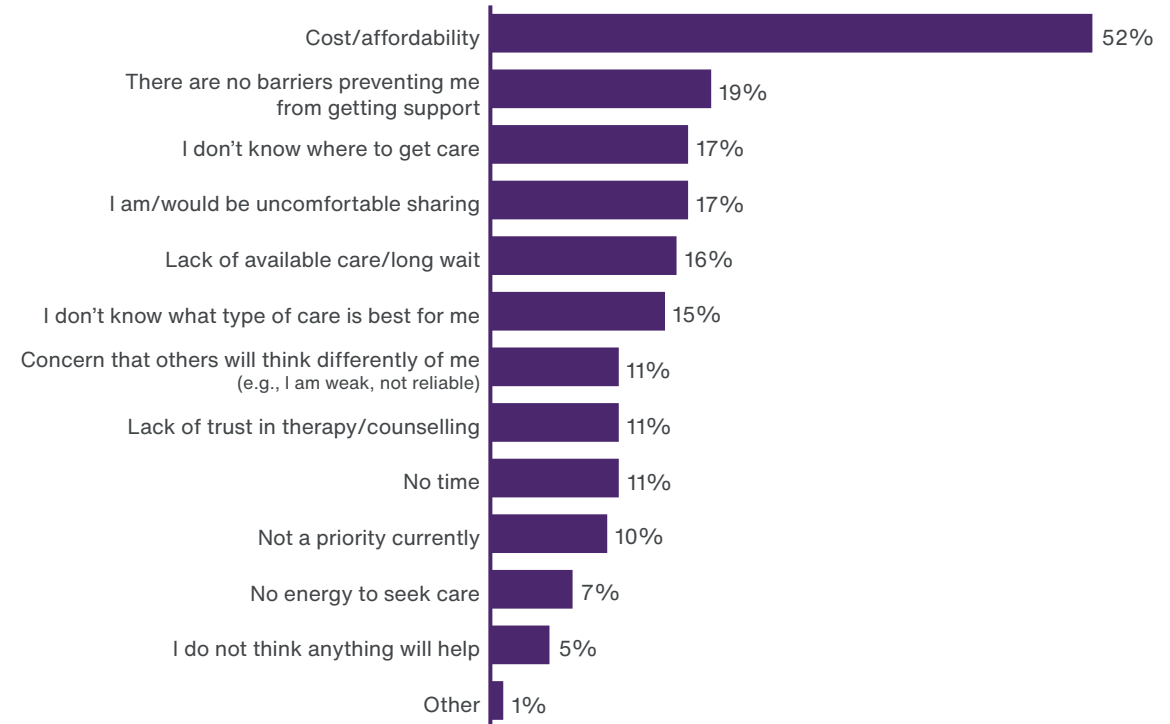


Barriers to mental health support.

Cost/affordability is the most commonly cited barrier to getting mental health support.

- More than half (52 per cent) of workers say cost/affordability is preventing them from getting mental health support, 17 per cent say they don't know where to get care or would be uncomfortable sharing, 16 per cent say it's a lack of available care or a long wait, and 15 per cent don't know what type of care is best
- Managers, parents, and workers under 40 are 50 per cent more likely to be concerned that others will think differently of them if they seek mental health support
- Workers over 50 are three times more likely than workers under 40 to report no barriers to support
- Non-parents are twice as likely as parents to report no barriers to support

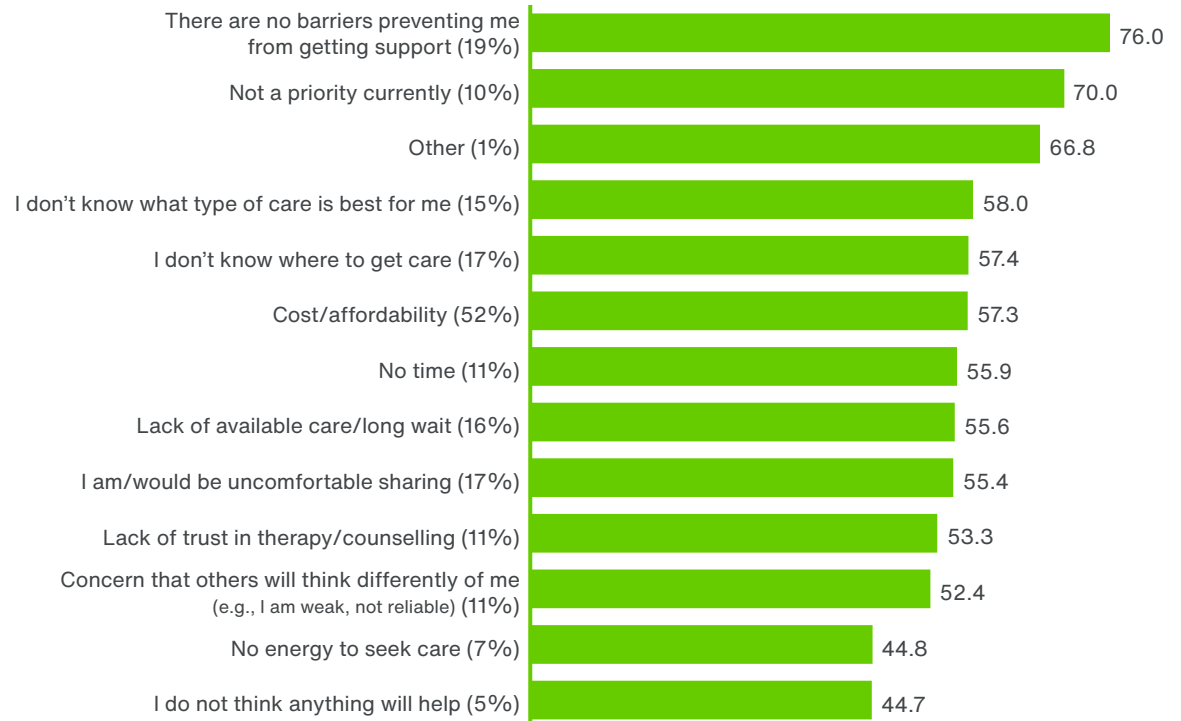
What would prevent you from getting mental health support if you needed it?



- The highest mental health score (76.0) is among 19 per cent of workers reporting no barriers to support, 14 points higher than the national average (62.0)¹
- The lowest mental health score (44.7) is among five per cent of workers who don't think anything will help, more than 31 points lower than workers reporting no barriers to support (76.0) and more than 17 points lower than the national average (62.0)



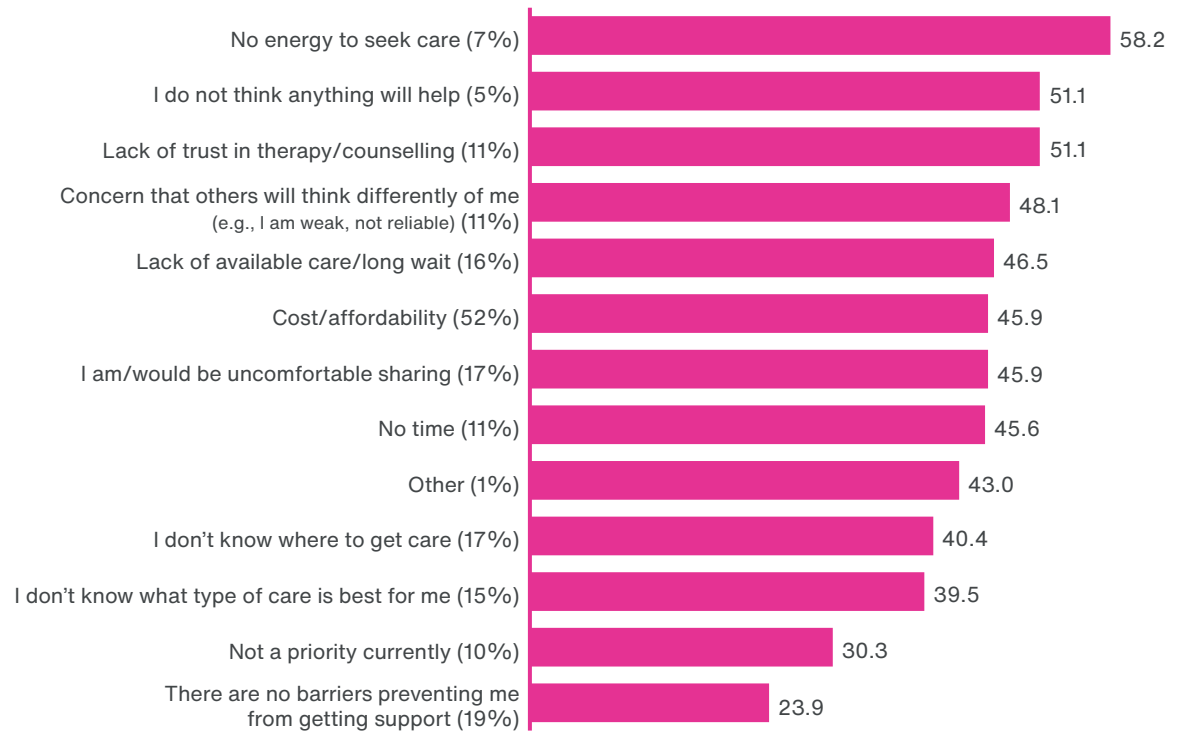
MHI score by “What would prevent you from getting mental health support if you needed it?”



- Workers reporting no barriers to support have an annual productivity loss of 23.9 working days, 34 fewer days than workers lacking the energy to seek care (58.2 working days per year)



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

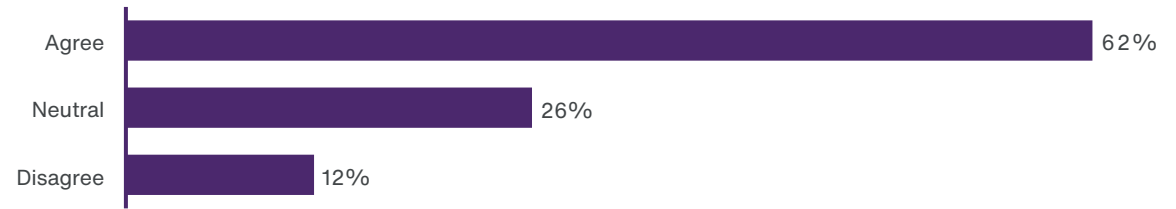


Workplace culture

Slightly more than six in 10 workers believe their organisation’s culture supports their wellbeing.

- More than six in 10 (62 per cent) perceive their workplace culture as supportive of their personal wellbeing; this group has the highest mental health score (66.5), nearly five points higher than the national average (62.0)
- One in eight (12 per cent) don’t perceive their workplace culture as supportive of their personal wellbeing; this group has the lowest mental health score (52.2), more than 14 points lower than workers who perceive their workplace culture as supportive (66.5) and nearly 10 points lower than the national average (62.0)
- Workers who perceive their workplace culture as supportive of their personal wellbeing have an annual productivity loss of 34.1 days; nearly 18 days fewer compared to workers who perceive it as unsupportive (51.7 working days per year)

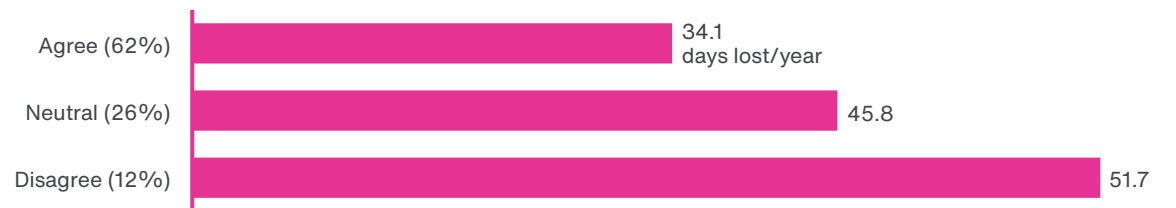
The workplace culture at my organisation supports my personal wellbeing



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”

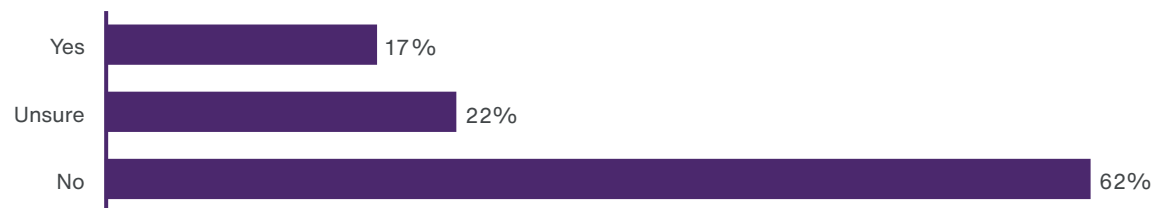


Turnover

Two in five workers are considering leaving their jobs or are uncertain about staying.

- More than three in five (62 per cent) workers are not thinking about leaving their jobs; this group has the highest mental health score (67.9), nearly six points higher than the national average (62.0)
- More than one in six (17 per cent) workers are thinking about leaving their jobs; this group has the lowest mental health score (50.9), 17 points lower than workers who are not thinking of leaving their jobs (67.9), and 11 points lower than the national average (62.0)
- Workers not considering leaving their jobs have an annual productivity loss of 32.3 days, a difference of nearly 21 days compared to workers considering a change (53.0 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?”

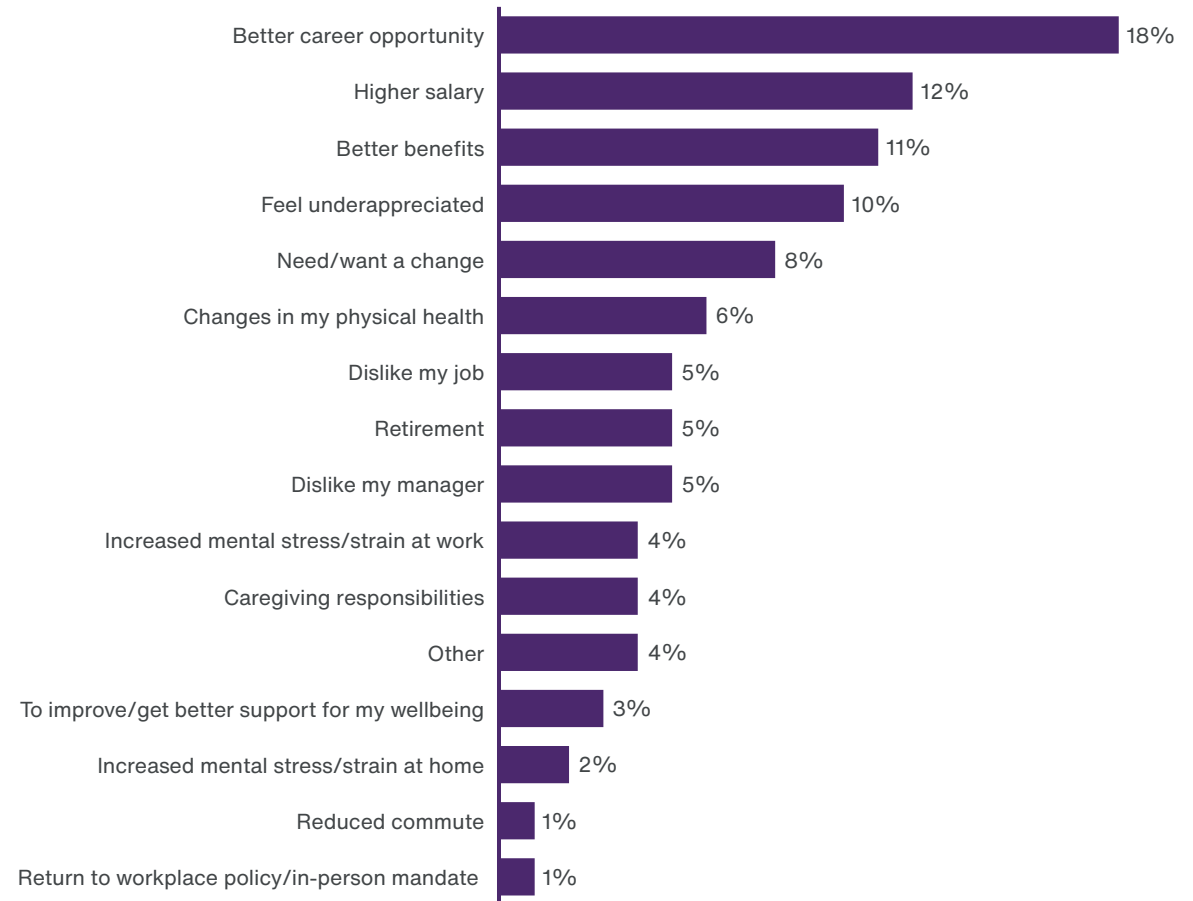


Better career opportunities, higher salaries, and better benefits are the primary drivers of turnover intention.

- Nearly one in five (18 per cent) workers say better career opportunities are the primary reason for considering leaving their jobs, 12 per cent say it's for a higher salary, and 11 per cent say better benefits is the reason for considering leaving their jobs



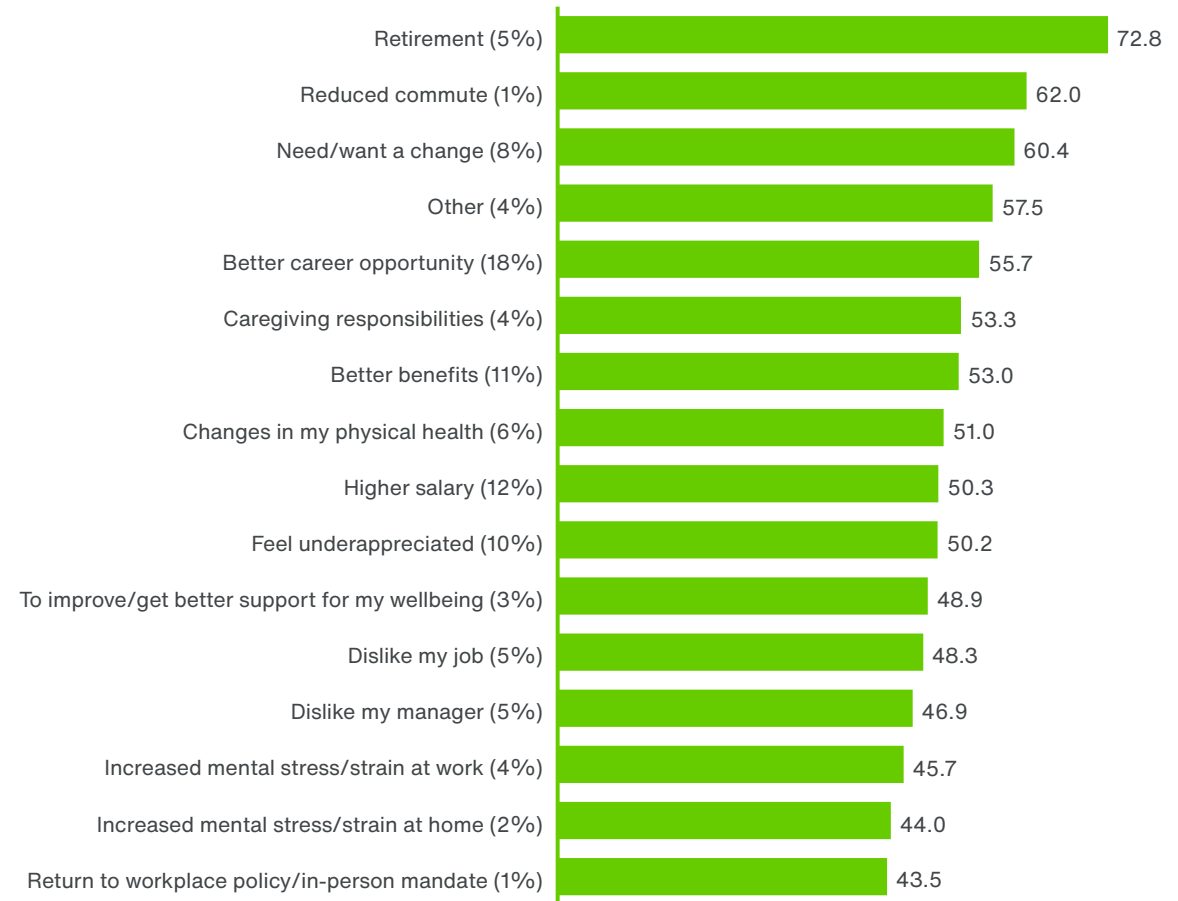
What is the primary reason you are thinking of leaving your job?



- The mental health score of 14 per cent of workers considering leaving their jobs for better benefits (53.0) is nine points lower than the national average (62.0); this group also experiences a productivity loss of 46.6 days annually

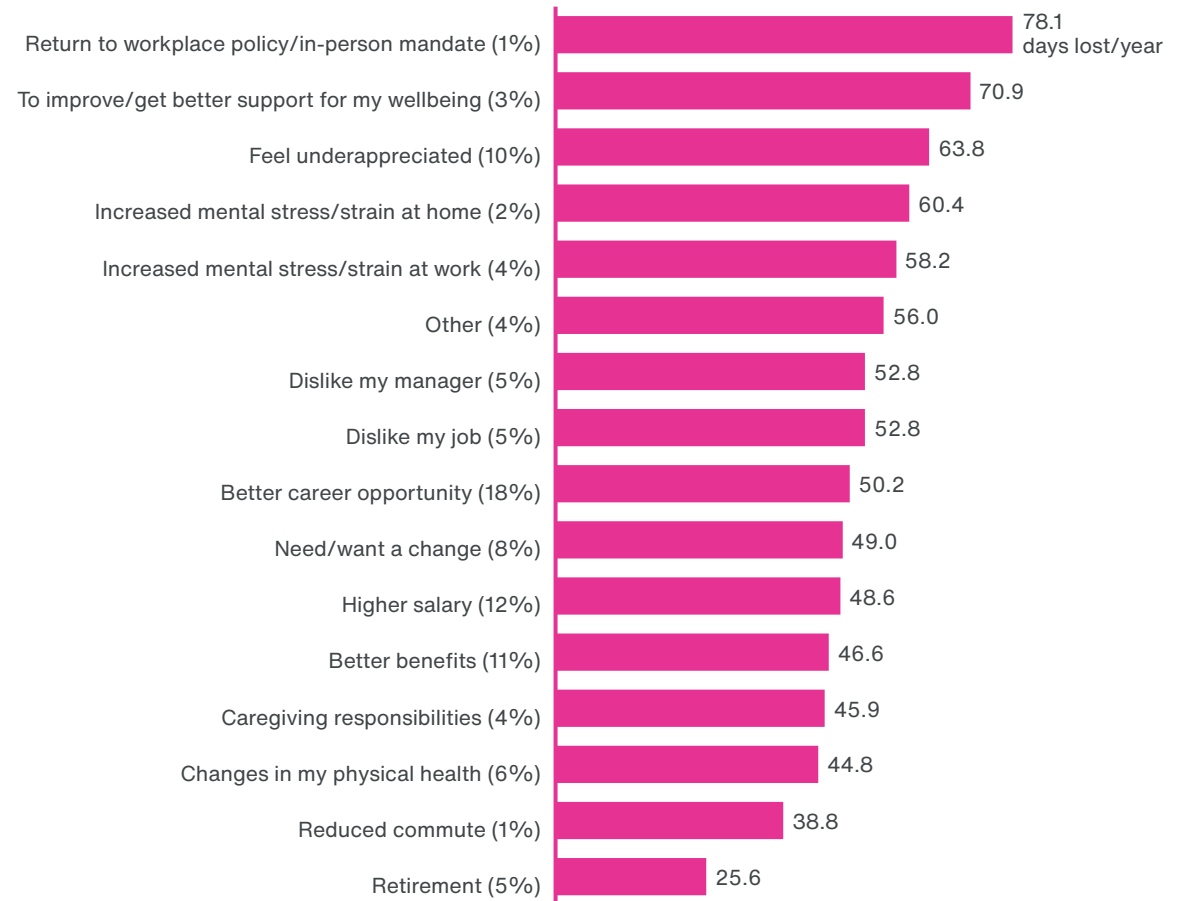


MHI score by “What is the primary reason you are thinking of leaving your job?”





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



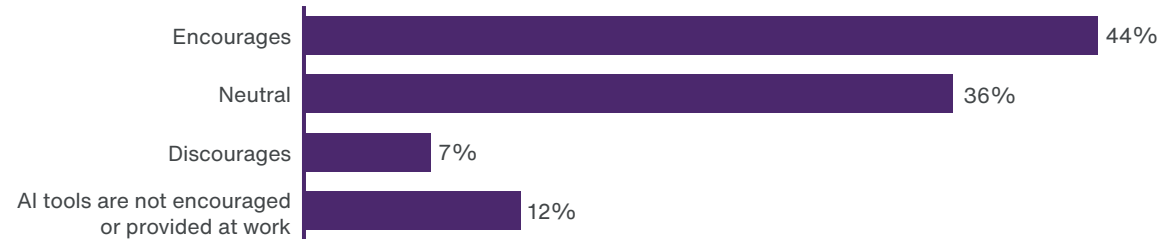
Adoption of AI at work.

More than two in five workers are encouraged to use AI tools in their work.

- More than two in five (44 per cent) workers report that their employer encourages AI use, 36 per cent are neutral on the matter, seven per cent are discouraged from using AI, and 12 per cent say AI tools are not encouraged nor provided at work
- Managers are 60 per cent more likely than non-managers to say their employer encourages the use of AI tools in their work
- The lowest mental health score (55.0) is among seven per cent of workers reporting their employer discourages the use of AI tools in their work, nearly eight points lower than workers whose employers encourage AI tools (62.7) and seven points lower than the national average (62.0)



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?”

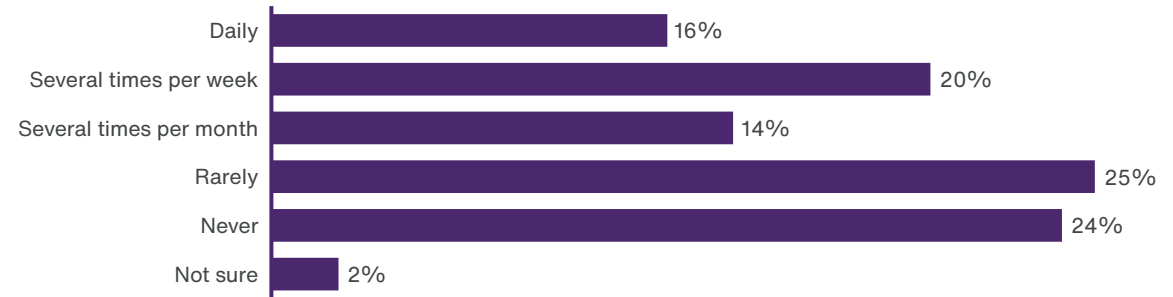


Among workers who use AI tools or technologies at work, nearly three in five report improved efficiency.

- More than one-third (36 per cent) of workers use AI in their work at least several times per week; a further 14 per cent use AI in their work several times per month
- Nearly three in five (59 per cent) workers using AI report improved efficiency
- 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 living in New Zealand who are currently employed or were employed within the last six months. Participants are selected to represent the age, gender, industry, and geographic distribution in New Zealand. 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 convert 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.

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