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Canadian mental health remains low even as country reopens from coronavirus lockdown

Staff | July 6, 2020



Even as Canada begins to reopen from coronavirus lockdown, uncertainty remains high and Canadians need employer mental-health supports more than ever.

According to Morneau Shepell Ltd.'s latest mental-health index, Canadians' mental-health score sat at negative 11 in June. The index measures the score based on a pre-2020 benchmark of 75. While June's score was **one point higher than May's**, it still represents the third monthly consecutive negative score.

Looking to specific mental-health issues, scores on anxiety (-12.9), depression (-12.7), work productivity (-12.1), optimism (-12.0) and isolation (-11.6) remained low but improved slightly across the board

compared to the previous month.

Read: [Employees still in work with reduced salaries highest on mental-health index](#)

“As the country enters new phases of reopening and restrictions begin to ease, it’s important to remain focused on the mental health of Canadians and recognize that mental well-being requires the same attention and action as physical health,” said Stephen Liptrap, Morneau Shepell’s president and chief executive officer, in a press release. “The long-term impact of continued low levels of mental health is not only a concern for individuals but also for organizations and governments due to higher health and disability costs and the negative impact on individuals’ participation in the economy.”

The index found a strong link between employer support and employee mental health. Indeed, mental health was worse among Canadians with employers that have been supporting employee mental health inconsistently (-17.2), poorly (-17.7) or very poorly (-26.3) throughout the pandemic. Results were significantly higher for those with employers supporting mental health somewhat well (-10.4) or very well (-1).

When asked what effective employer support would look like, more than a quarter of respondents cited providing clear guidance on how to prevent spreading or getting the virus and 23 per cent mentioned help dealing with anxiety.

Read: [56% of Canadians say coronavirus negatively impacting mental health: survey](#)

The research also found Canadians are likely to change their spending habits following the pandemic, with just 19 per cent saying they plan to return to their previous habits. More than a third (39 per cent) said they're concerned about risk of infection from being in stores and other service areas, 27 per cent are concerned about job security and 22 per cent said their income has changed since the pandemic started.

“The future of the economy remains uncertain, despite businesses reopening across the country,” said Paula Allen, senior vice-president of research, analytics and innovation at Morneau Shepell. “Our mental-health index shows that Canadians are holding onto funds much tighter than before the pandemic and are proceeding with caution when it comes to their disposable income. We need to pay close attention to the mental-health impact that the current economy has on Canadians, to ensure their physical, mental, social and financial well-being remain strong following the pandemic and in the years to come.”

Read: [MPAC supporting staff mental health during pandemic with leader chats](#)

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