



# Hardiness across occupational groups: A stress-shielding mindset

The Hardiness Resilience Gauge® (HRG) is grounded in over 30 years of research and development and provides valuable insight into an individual's level of Hardiness and their ability to cope with stressful and unexpected situations.

People high in Hardiness tend to see changes and disruptions as *challenges* to overcome and learn from, believe they are in *control* of their own destinies, and have a strong sense of *commitment* and purpose in life.



**Levels of Hardiness** vary between people; and can also vary depending on an individual's occupation or the industry they work in. By understanding occupation and industry differences in Hardiness levels, we can better understand the needs of certain groups and facilitate more personalized debrief sessions and industry-specific coaching and training.



**CHALLENGE**

Seeing change and novelty as exciting and as an opportunity for you to learn and grow.



**CONTROL**

Having a sense of self-efficacy and the belief that you can influence outcomes in your life.



**COMMITMENT**

Being engaged and seeing most parts of your life as interesting and meaningful.

Research shows that Hardiness can be a protective factor against stress-related problems in many occupations. To explore how well HRG scores connect to important work-related outcomes, we conducted a study in which individuals who completed the HRG then responded to some questions about their experiences with stress and whether they view stress as beneficial (a sample item from this scale is “I thrive in stressful situations”), their engagement at work, and their perceived success at their job. Data were collected in 2021 from 860 employed adults across five occupation groups. People 18 years old and over from around the world (including locations such as U.S., Canada, Germany, China, and South Africa) took the HRG through MHS’ online portal for professional development or research purposes. The five occupation/industry groups were: Financial & Business Operators (*n* = 170), Healthcare Practitioners (*n* = 165), Managers (*n* = 357), Protective Services (*n* = 49), and Sales (*n* = 119).

**How does HRG relate to important work-related outcomes?**

On average, people typically score around 100 on the HRG, and most people will have scores that don’t stray too far from that (about 50% of our samples of people from the general population score between 90 and 110). To analyze this data, we started by categorizing the people into two groups: High (Total Hardiness score greater than or equal to 110), and Low (Total Hardiness score less than 90). We found that people with high Hardiness scores are significantly more likely to rate stress as a positive experience. They were also more likely to report being engaged and successful in their jobs compared to those who are lower in Hardiness (see Figure 1; note that all comparisons presented are statistically significant and represent a medium to large effect size, consistent with previous

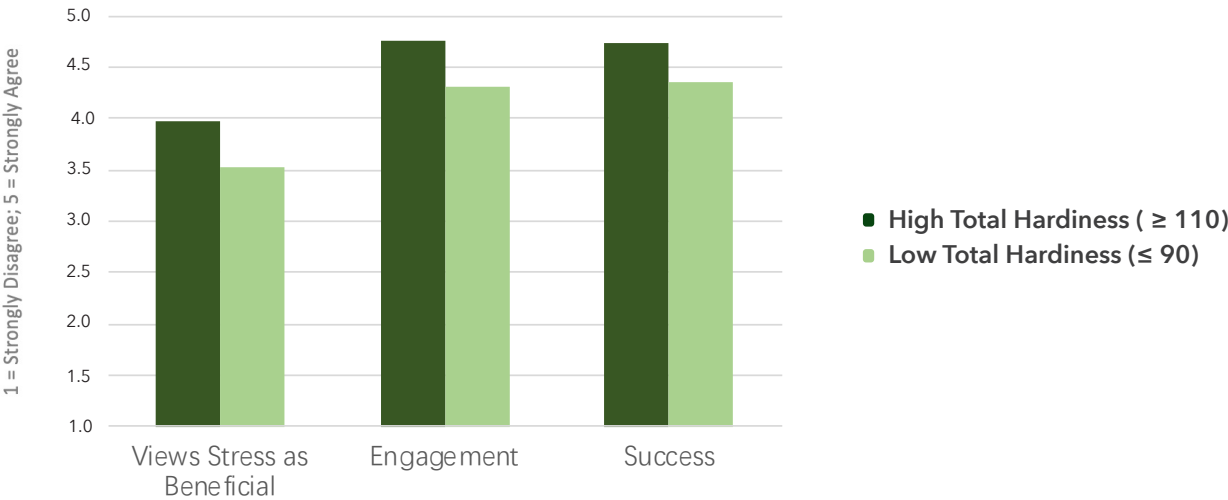
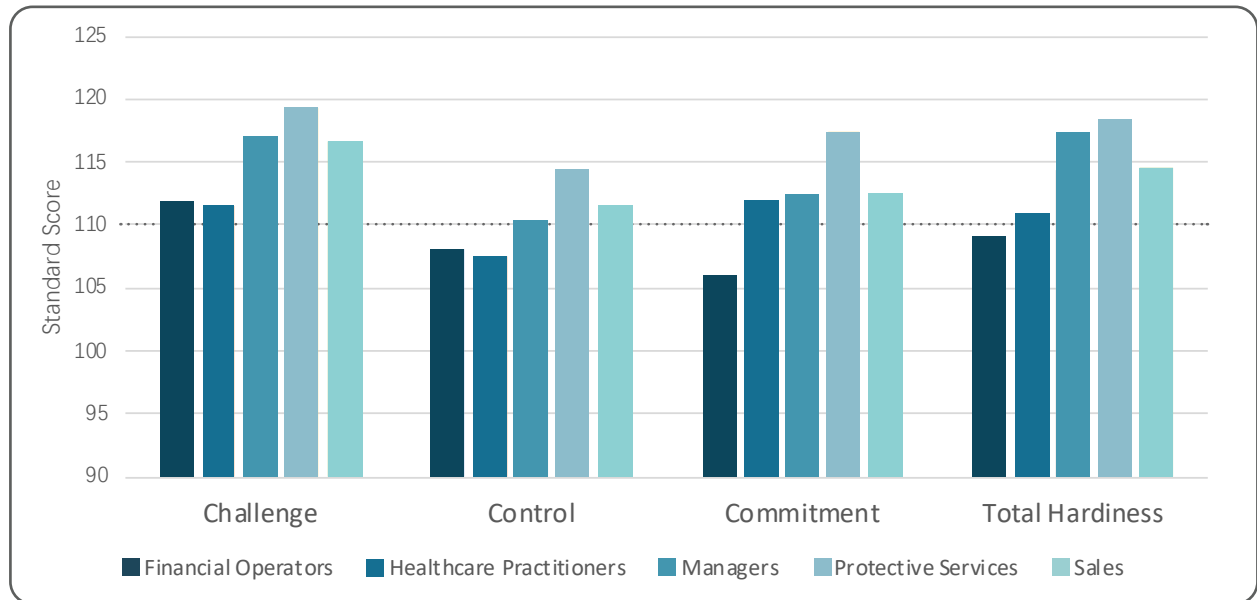


Figure 1. Key Organizational Outcomes Differ by HRG Scores

## How does Hardiness differ by occupation?

Figure 2 illustrates differences in HRG scores in more detail (three subscales of Challenge, Control, and Commitment, plus Total Hardiness) for each of the five occupation groups. Interestingly, the Protective Services group had the highest scores compared to all other groups. Financial Operators and Healthcare Practitioners had similar scores to each other, but they had lower scores than scores from other occupation groups. Managers and Sales had scores that fell in the middle range. Differences between these occupation groups were found to be statistically significant.



**Figure 2. HRG Scores by Occupation Group**

On average, all five occupation groups had HRG subscale scores that fell in either the Mid-Range (90-109) or High Range (110-130). Figures 3 through 5 present each subscale separately, as it may be helpful to zoom in on one area at a time. The dotted line in these figures represents the boundary for High Range scores.

There were some notable differences between the groups with modest effect sizes. For instance, Commitment scores for Financial Operators were all in the Mid-Range (90-109), while professionals in Protective Services scored in the High Range (110-130).

These results demonstrate the baseline level of Hardiness we observed for these occupation groups, and it is interesting to note how they vary. Further, these results suggest that it might be beneficial to provide debriefs, coaching, and/or training based on the industry where people completing the HRG work.



## Challenge

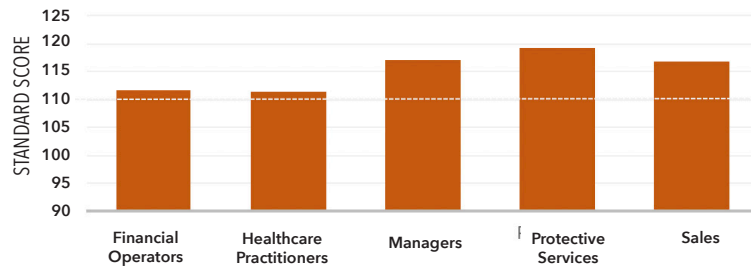


Figure 3. Differences in Challenge Scores by Occupation Group



### CHALLENGE

Seeing change and novelty as exciting and as an opportunity for you to learn and grow.

## Control

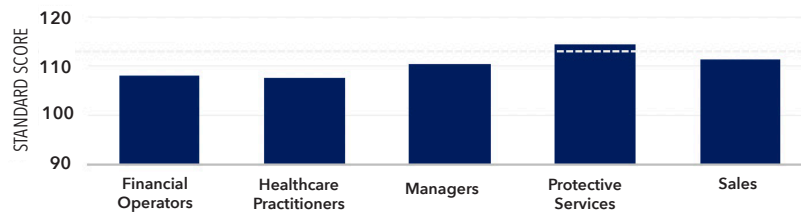


Figure 4. Differences in Control Scores by Occupation Group



### CONTROL

Having a sense of self-efficacy and the belief that you can influence outcomes in your life.

## Commitment

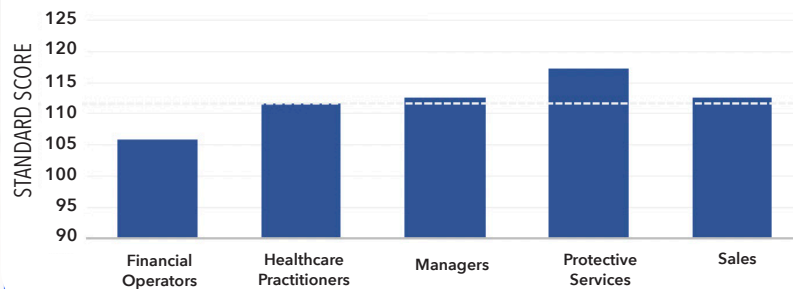


Figure 5. Differences in Commitment Scores by Occupation Group



### COMMITMENT

Being engaged and seeing most parts of your life as interesting and meaningful.



## How do work-related outcomes differ by occupation?

We also examined whether people from different occupation groups rated these work-related outcome questions differently (see Figure 6). We found that the Protective Services group was the most likely to see stress as having benefits, while Financial Operators had the least positive view of stress. Professionals in all industries reported a high degree of job success and, overall, a high degree of engagement at work, though the ratings varied slightly between groups.

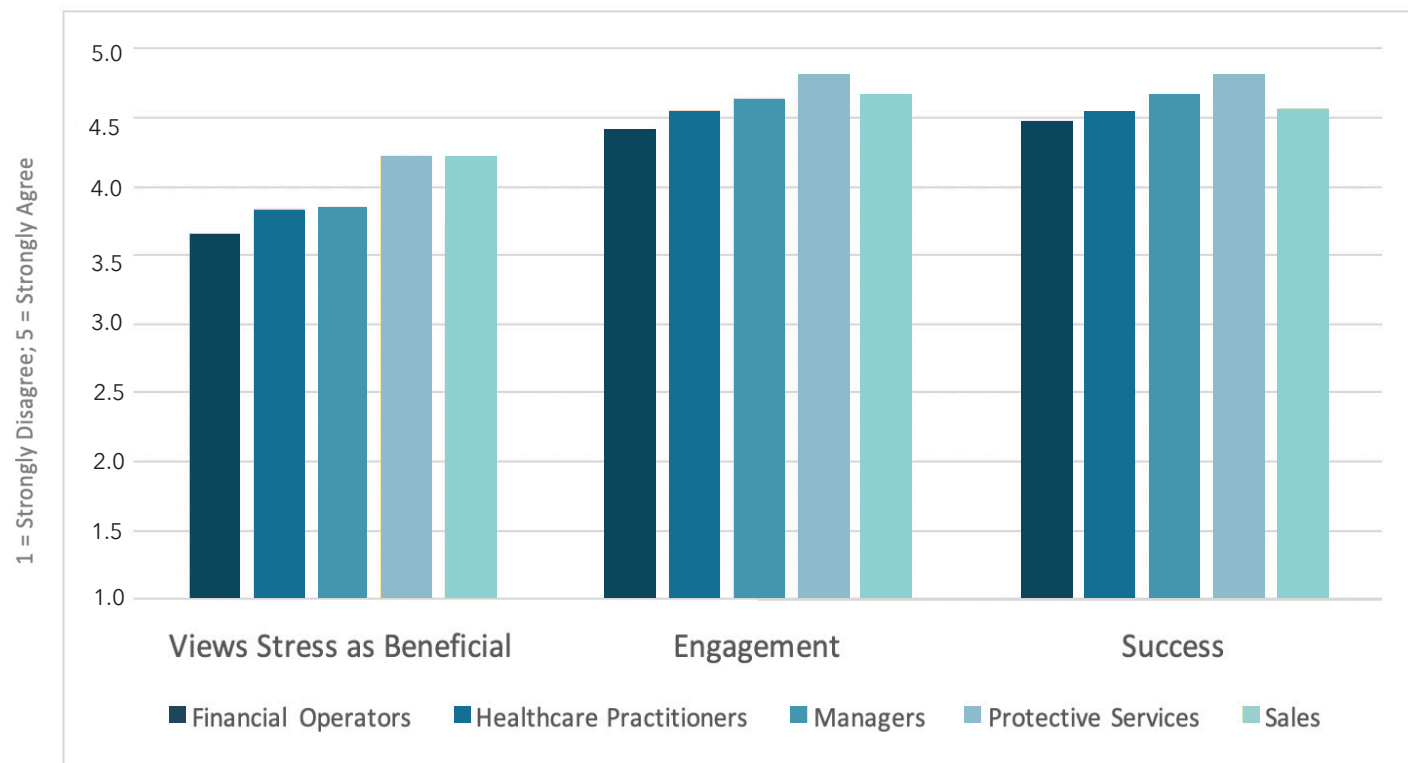


Figure 6. Work-Related Outcome Differences by Occupation Group

## What are the strengths of different occupation groups?

To examine components of Hardiness that could be further leveraged and developed, the top strengths and challenges for each of the five occupation groups were determined by their highest and lowest scores among the HRG subscales (i.e., Challenge, Control, and Commitment). Figures 7 and 8 depict these differences. It is reasonable to believe that there would be more combinations when including more occupation groups, indicating the importance of understanding how a client's occupation and workplace setting might influence (or be influenced by) their HRG scores.

Among the five occupation groups, **Challenge** is the most common strength, and **Control** is the most common challenge.



Figure 7. Highest HRG Subscale by Occupation Group

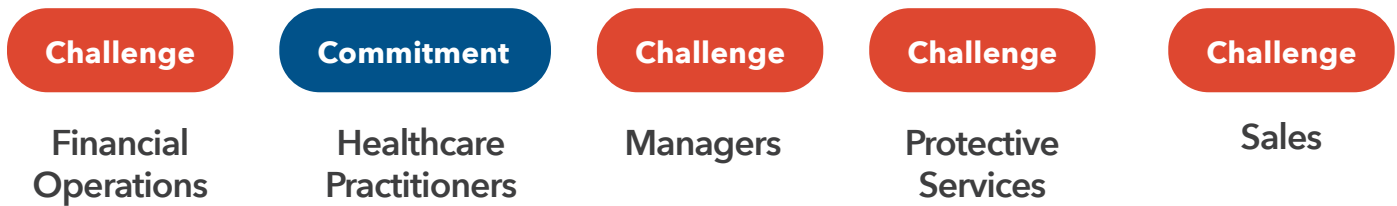
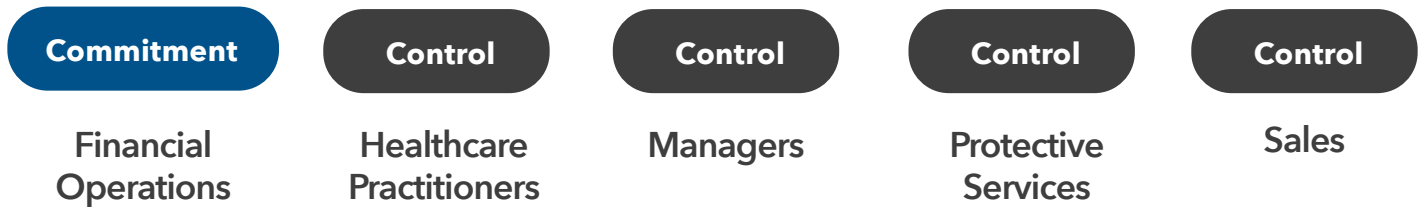


Figure 8. Lowest HRG Subscale by Occupation Group



Moreover, keeping the HRG subscales in balance might be an important consideration. Figures 7 and 8 illustrate the Strengths (subscales with the highest score) and Areas to Improve (subscales with the lowest score) for each occupation group in this study. For example, Financial Operators show strength in the Challenge scale, which fell in the High Range of scores (over 110; see Figure 3), but their areas to improve could be Commitment, which showed an average score in the Mid-Range (90-110; see Figure 5). Hardiness subscales are related, so it would be worth exploring how and why these components differ when considering development strategies. These imbalances may lead to diverse potential effects on a person's behavior and how they interpret experiences.

Therefore, when providing a debrief or coaching session to a client, it is beneficial to consider their context so that conversations can be customized to a client's industry, needs, or personal experience. This study's results highlight the differences between occupation groups, which can serve as a point of reflection for coaches and clients alike.