



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Financial stressors are having an alarming impact on the mental health of struggling Canadians, according to results from Poll 17 released today**

Toronto, Ontario — Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC) released the results from its seventeenth poll today, where 3,819 adult Canadians reported on their mental health and the factors that influence it between July 27 to August 13, 2023. The data demonstrates that financial concerns remain a major factor in negative mental health among Canadians, as well as the following major findings:

- 39% of respondents feel economic issues are impacting their mental health.
- Suicide ideation among Canadians experiencing financial challenges is alarmingly high with 41% reporting having thought about suicide in the last year.
- The impacts of inflation are affecting Canadians with 24% reporting having gone into debt as a result.
- Housing and food insecurity remains high with 23% of Canadians concerned about their ability to make rent or mortgage payments, and 37% struggling to feed themselves or their families.
- 29% of Canadians cite an inability to pay as the reason for not accessing mental health care despite needing it (an increase of 11% from our previous polls).

“To support data-informed decision making, our national population polling work is designed to track the mental health of Canadians and report on it quickly, so as to get current data into the hands of stakeholders within a few weeks,” says Akela Peoples, CEO, MHRC. “The negative impact of the economic downturn is gradually increasing. We are seeing that financial burdens are not only affecting the mental health of Canadians, but also their ability to access mental health care. This is a vicious cycle that must be addressed.”

Additional major findings from Poll 17 include:

- There has been an increase in Canadians paying for mental health services out of pocket (from 23% in May 2023 to 30%) due to not having sufficient coverage through their benefits.
- More than one quarter of Canadians (27%) are currently dealing with chronic pain. Although more prevalent among older respondents (35%), more than one in seven (14%) younger Canadians (18-34 years old) also report currently experiencing chronic pain.

- The most common ways of dealing with pain are over-the-counter painkillers (57%), non-pharmacological strategies (52%), and prescriptions (24%).
- Those who have accessed mental health supports in the past year are split as to how these supports have been accessed. Almost two-fifths (39%) accessed only in-person supports, while 31% accessed all their supports virtually or a mix of both (30%).

These, and other key findings, are featured in both the summary and full report of the survey, “Understanding the Mental Health of Canadians through COVID-19 and Beyond: Poll 17” released today by MHRC and available at [www.mhrc.ca](http://www.mhrc.ca).

-30-

#### ABOUT THE POLL

MHRC’s national polling is part of a multi-year effort to track the mental health challenges of COVID-19 and beyond. The goal of MHRC’s polls is to capture Canadians’ reported perception of their level of anxiety and depression, and to identify and evaluate the factors that influence mental health. Since this work began in early 2020, MHRC now has the largest, most comprehensive database on COVID-19 and the mental health of Canadians, with over 50,000 responses to our polls to date.

This study was conducted by Pollara Strategic Insights with an online sample of 3,819 adult Canadians and was conducted from July 27 to August 13, 2023. Results from a probability sample of this size could be considered accurate to within  $\pm 1.6$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Results have been weighted based on age, gender and region to be representative of the Canadian population.

#### ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH CANADA

Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC) is a national charity that serves to advance mental health through studentships, granting, data collection/analysis and strategic initiatives. As a leading mental health organization in Canada, we are dedicated to improving the lives of all Canadians by advancing mental health knowledge in unique ways—notably by leading, seeding and influencing to create better mental health systems. One example of our work is funded by Health Canada to monitor and report on the mental health of Canadians. We collect population data, analyze and report on it to governments and stakeholders nationally to support data informed decision-making on what people need and how our services are performing. Mental health systems and services cannot improve without research – research is an investment in the future.

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