

Canadians report increased levels of anxiety since the onset of COVID-19, according to findings of new survey by Mental Health Research Canada

Toronto, April 30, 2020 – The number of Canadians expressing high-to-extreme levels of anxiety has quadrupled since the start of the COVID-19 crisis. This is among the key findings of a new survey released today by Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC), a national organization that is committed to advancing impact-focused research in mental health.

MHRC launched the survey “Mental Health in Crisis: How COVID-19 Is Impacting Canadians,” to capture Canadians’ perception of their level of anxiety and depression, and to identify and evaluate the factors that influence mental health. MHRC plans to do follow-up surveys every four to eight weeks to track movement in the mental health crisis in Canada.

“We look forward to sharing this information and collaborating with our stakeholders, including governments and service providers, to advance service delivery and inform policy decisions to support Canadians in their return to better health,” says Akela Peoples, CEO of MHRC.

The survey’s other major findings include:

- Feelings of depression are rising steadily: 7% of Canadians report high levels of depression before COVID-19. This has risen to 16% with high levels of depression today. 22% predict high levels of depression if social isolation continues for two more months.
- The most negative impacts on mental health cited by Canadians are concerns over a family member becoming infected, job loss and economic anxiety. The most positive impacts on mental health cited by Canadians are pets, communicating with those outside your household, and reading.
- Of those Canadians who reported having a diagnosed mood disorder, 53% were accessing mental health supports before COVID-19, with 42% accessing supports today.
- Higher anxiety is most prevalent among 18 to 34 year-old Canadians (43%), in particular when compared to Canadians 55 years of age and older (27%), women (40%), and people with children in the household (41%).

- 43% of health care workers are feeling a high level of anxiety since COVID-19 (compared to 14% before).
- 24% of Canadians working from home indicate that it has a negative impact on their mental health.

“The pandemic is creating a great deal of mental distress, as well as a wide range of innovative and creative responses. We need to be aware of what is happening to Canadians and to be guided by this experience when we decide on action that will support good mental health,” says John Trainor, Chair of MHRC’s Board of Directors and Adjunct Professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto.

The survey was conducted in both official languages by Pollara Strategic Insights for MHRC from April 22 to April 28, and engaged more than 1,800 Canadians 18 years of age or older. Every province and territory are represented in the survey.

A full report of the survey will be posted on MHRC’s website (www.mhrc.ca) during the week of May 4.

Available for interview is Dr. David Dozois, Member of MHRC’s Board of Directors, and Professor of Psychology and Director of the Clinical Psychology Graduate Program at Western University. Dr. Dozois participated in the design and structure of the survey.

For interview requests, please contact Barbara Kelly, Director of Communications, at 647-408-9499 or barbarak@mhrc.ca.

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ABOUT THE SURVEY

This study was conducted by Pollara Strategic Insights with an online sample of 1,803 adult Canadians and was conducted between April 22nd and 28th, 2020. Results from a probability sample of this size could be considered accurate to within ± 2.3 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, charitable organization dedicated to improving the lives of the **1 in 5 Canadians living with mental illness**, as

well as their families, caregivers and communities. We advance evidence-based mental health knowledge that is problem-solving and applicable in the real world.

QUICK FACTS:

- MHRC evolved from a provincial organization, Ontario Mental Health Foundation, which advanced leading-edge mental health research for 55 years.
- MHRC co-funded the first-ever national Mental Health Innovation Prize, and is currently co-funding three grants to advance digital solutions for child and youth mental health for application in multiple provinces.
- MHRC funded 10 diverse research projects, ranging from psychosis to anxiety to maternal health, from 2016 to 2019.
- MHRC is co-funding the Canadian component of a global analysis of mental health research funding, coordinated by the International Alliance of Mental Health Research Funders.