

## POLL #6 IN MHRC'S NATIONAL 12-PART SERIES

### **1/3 of Canadians report their mental health is affecting their ability to function, with their social and family life being the hardest hit**

Toronto, May 19, 2021 – One-third (30%) of Canadians report their mental health is affecting their ability to function, with the greatest impact on their social and family life. Of these Canadians still in school or in the workforce, 8% noted losing school or work days to mental health and 30% noted their productivity is significantly impaired.

On the positive side, two-thirds (69%) of Canadians indicate a high degree of resiliency, which suggests a belief in a robust mental health recovery post-pandemic and a level of optimism.

When looking ahead two months, even Canadians with high levels of anxiety expect their mental health to improve (28% to 18%), which suggests the vaccine efforts, reduced lockdowns and start of summer will improve mental health. Depression levels are expected to remain steady.

These are among the key findings of the sixth poll by Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC) in an ongoing series of polls on “Mental Health in Crisis: How COVID-19 Is Impacting Canadians.” The poll captures Canadians’ perceptions of their levels of anxiety and depression in order to identify and evaluate the factors that influence mental health.

“The need to address mental health at work and school was increasingly apparent prior to the pandemic. This need had come to light even more since COVID-19, with higher rates of absenteeism and decreased productivity and efficiency. When COVID-19 is behind us, the government will need to focus on building a stronger mental health system with equitable access to evidence-based services for all Canadians,” says Dr. David Dozois, MHRC Board Member and National Spokesperson, and Professor of Psychology and Director of the Clinical Psychology Graduate Program at Western University.

Other major findings of MHRC’s study include:

- Self-rated anxiety continues to rise, with 28% of Canadians reporting high levels of anxiety and 17% reporting high levels of depression. This is driven primarily by an increase in Ontario, where 1 in 3 (33%) Ontarians reports high levels of anxiety and 1 in 5 (21%) reports high levels of depression.

- Specific groups and demographics continue to show the highest rates of self-rated anxiety and depression, including younger Canadians, those with young children at home, those living alone or with roommates, and frontline healthcare workers.
- Going outside (walking and hiking) continues to be the most positive thing you can do to support your mental health.
- The number of Canadians accessing mental health services is increasing, with 11% accessing services in the year before the onset of the pandemic, compared to 18% who accessed in the year that COVID began.

“We are pleased that stakeholders across the country are using MHRC’s data to inform the path forward and into COVID-recovery. Mental health is now, more than ever, a public health priority. If there is anything good to come from this crisis, it is that every Canadian now understands we all have mental health, just as we all have physical health, and we can all relate to how critically important it is,” says Akela Peoples, CEO of MHRC.

An abridged 15-page report of MHRC’s study is attached; the full report of Poll 6 will be posted on MHRC’s website at [www.mhrc.ca/national-polling-covid](http://www.mhrc.ca/national-polling-covid).

Data for our seventh poll will be collected in the first to second week of June.

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### ABOUT THE POLL:

The poll was conducted by Pollara Strategic Insights; 4,005 adult Canadians were surveyed online, including an oversample of 500 surveys with residents of New Brunswick and an oversample of 500 surveys with residents of Newfoundland.

The poll was conducted from April 20 to April 28, 2021. This is the sixth poll in MHRC’s 12-part series; results of earlier polls are compared when applicable. Results from a probability sample of this size could be considered accurate to within  $\pm 2.2$  percentage points; they are weighted based on age, gender and region to be representative of the Canadian population.

Findings from Polls 2 to 5 are now searchable on MHRC’s free, interactive Data Portal, [www.mhrc.ca/covid-data-portal](http://www.mhrc.ca/covid-data-portal), and data from Poll 6 data is currently being intergrated.