



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mental Health is improving—especially for older Canadians—as more people are vaccinated and lockdowns ease. This, and many additional findings in the latest report from Mental Health Research Canada.

Toronto, July 13, 2021 – Mental Health Research Canada noted a significant decrease in the number of Canadians reporting high anxiety in their latest report on the state of mental health in Canada. This decrease, from 28% to 24%, is the first substantive reduction in self-reported anxiety since the start of the pandemic. This improvement was driven by a significant reduction in the number of Canadians aged 55+ reporting high anxiety. Anxiety for key groups, such as younger Canadians, remained elevated. The number of Canadians reporting high depression has remained steady.

These and other key findings are featured in both the summary and full report of the survey “Mental Health in Crisis: How COVID-19 Is Impacting Canadians,” released today by Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC) and available at <https://www.mhrc.ca/findings-of-poll-7>. This poll covers data collected from June 7 to June 13, 2021.

MHRC’s poll has been designed to capture Canadians’ reported perception of their level of anxiety and depression, and to identify and evaluate the factors that influence mental health through the pandemic. This report includes data from the 7th in a series of 12 polls as part of a multi-year effort to track the mental health challenges of COVID-19.

“Like the virus and the lockdowns that followed, mental health issues have impacted some groups more than others. Our extensive data set is searchable and freely available on our website and we hope it will be useful to stakeholders across Canada,” says Akela Peoples, CEO of MHRC.

Additional findings include:

- Ontario had the highest levels of self-reported anxiety and depression (at 27% and 18% respectively), but this is down significantly since the previous poll in April during the height of lockdowns.

- While there is little difference in rates of self-reported depression between those with one dose of the vaccine and two, we noted higher rates of reported depression in those who are not yet or will not be vaccinated (19% for the unvaccinated vs. 15% for the vaccinated). This is in line with previous findings that those who choose to ignore social distancing guidelines were indicating significantly higher levels of depression.
- Younger Canadians continue to indicate the highest anxiety and depression of all age groups. For the first time on this poll, we were able to collect a sample of 16/17 year-olds, who reported the very high levels of anxiety and depression (30% anxiety, 25% depression) when compared to older age groups. This group also reported the highest levels of suicide ideation (33% in past year, 18% last 3 months). Conversely, this group reported a lower incidence of diagnosis of a mental health issue, which could indicate a diagnosis gap.
- Frontline healthcare workers had a significant increase in reporting that they have been diagnosed with a mental health issue by a medical professional. A full 40% indicate a diagnosis, up from 30% in the last poll. This could reflect a lag between the crisis and seeking help as the crisis subsides. Previous studies have indicated that the primary profession with a diagnosis inside this category is registered nurses.
- 45% of those who identify as LGBTQIA2S+ indicate a high level of anxiety, and 27% indicate high levels of depression. This is up significantly from pre-COVID levels where 9% indicated high levels of anxiety, and 11% depression.

“What our poll tells us is that COVID-19 is impacting the mental health of Canadians in notably different ways. Canada’s recovery will require solid data to inform policy-making and ensure we are best able to provide effective services and programs for Canadians,” says 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.

The survey was conducted in both official languages by Pollara Strategic Insights for MHRC from June 7 to 13, 2021, and engaged more than 4,000 Canadians 16 years of age or older and all provinces.

Available for interview is Dr. David Dozois. Dr. Dozois participated in the design of the survey.

For interview requests, please contact Michael Cooper, Vice-President, at 416-894-5553 or mcooper@mhrc.ca.

This study was conducted by Pollara Strategic Insights with an online sample of 4,010 adult Canadians and was conducted between June 7th to June 13th, 2021. Results from a probability sample of this size could be considered accurate to within ± 1.5 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.