



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:** Michael Cooper, Vice-President,  
MHRC

**PHONE:** 416-894-5553

**EMAIL:** mcooper@mhrc.ca

**Canadians are experiencing anxiety differently across cohorts as the pandemic progresses and vaccination numbers increase. This, and many additional findings in the latest report from Mental Health Research Canada.**

Toronto, September 14, 2021 – Mental Health Research Canada noted significant differences in the mental health experience of Canadians in its most recent poll, with the support of Health Canada. As the first poll where most respondents (84%) are double vaccinated, overall levels of self-reported anxiety have remained consistent but a divergence in the self-reported mental health of vaccinated vs. unvaccinated Canadians has been identified on multiple indicators.

Unvaccinated people indicated significantly more symptoms of mental distress, as well as higher levels of anxiety and depression compared to vaccinated people. 75% of vaccinated individuals indicated concern on the continuing potential threat of the virus while only 38% of unvaccinated had similar concerns. Looking ahead two months, when thinking about mental health in the context of continuing restrictions the unvaccinated indicated significantly higher levels of anxiety and depression than the vaccinated population with 28% of unvaccinated vs. 12% of vaccinated predicting high anxiety and 26% unvaccinated vs 11% vaccinated predicting high depression.

Alberta replaced Ontario as the province whose citizens indicate the highest levels of self-reported anxiety. This is the first recent poll that Ontario hasn't led in this metric. These numbers represent a unique situation because Alberta's outcomes appear to coincide with higher case counts, as opposed to previous polls in which region-based higher anxiety was more associated with lockdown restrictions.

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 [www.mhrc.ca](http://www.mhrc.ca). This poll covers data collected from August 17<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, 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 8<sup>th</sup> in a series of 12 polls as part of a multi-year effort to track the mental health challenges of COVID-19.

“Every Canadian has experienced the pandemic differently. Our data set, freely available and searchable on our website, clearly shows this range of experiences. The information we provide is vital to creating informed, effective interventions as we move through the next stage of the pandemic,” says Akela Peoples, CEO of MHRC.

Additional findings include:

- Suicide ideation is at its highest since April 2021. 14% of Canadians have thought about suicide in the past year, trending upward from 13% in Poll 7 and 12% in Poll 6. Thoughts of suicide are higher among those who live alone, those in the frontline healthcare sector, and those with high rated anxiety or depression.
- 1-in-4 (26%) of parents indicate that their children “rarely” or “never” have enough of a chance to socialize with other children in the last month.
- One-in-three Canadians (32%) indicate either that they are, or they should be, accessing mental health supports since COVID-19. The increase in service delivery is almost entirely in virtual services (phone, text, online) — 4% of Canadians are accessing services in this way in the year prior to COVID, compared to 14% now.

“MHRC’s national poll indicates that Canadians experience a range of pandemic-related mental health outcomes. Data-driven initiatives like this polling reflect the genuine experience of Canadians, which is useful for policy-makers across the country” 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 August 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021, and engaged more than 3,000 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](mailto:mcooper@mhrc.ca).

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## ABOUT THE POLL

This study was conducted by Pollara Strategic Insights with an online sample of 3,010 adult Canadians and was conducted between August 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021. Results from a probability sample of this size could be considered accurate to within  $\pm 1.5$  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.