



Mental Health During COVID-19 Outbreak: Poll #9



November 2021

Major Findings

- **The newly mandated proof of vaccination that has been implemented in some fashion by all provinces has had a positive impact on the mental health of nearly half of Canadians** (47%) with one-quarter saying it has had a very positive impact. 11% report it having a negative impact on their mental health and 37% report it having no impact at all. 47% of unvaccinated Canadians indicated that this implementation has had a negative effect on their mental health.
- **Anxiety is steadily decreasing amongst Canadians.** After peaking in Poll 6 (April 2021) at 28%, the percentage of Canadians reporting high levels of anxiety has decreased to 23%, the lowest since Poll 4 (December 2020) and just 3% higher than the start of the pandemic. The percentage of Canadians experiencing **high levels of depression remains consistent** with the last two polls (June and August 2021) at 16%
- **Suicide ideation remains high, though it has not increased since Poll 8** (August 2021). 14% of Canadians have thought about suicide in the past year, with 3% having planned a suicide attempt. 16-17 year olds are experiencing more thoughts of suicide (29% this year, 17% in the past 3 months), as are frontline workers (28%), LGBTQ2S+ identifying Canadians (38% this year) and men (16% vs. 13% women)
- **Canadians are feeling considerably more hopeful this year compared to last.** 68% responded that they are ‘most of the time’ or ‘always’ hopeful about their future, a 13% increase from Poll 8. The vast majority also feel their relationships are good (85%) and that they have people they can count on (78%).
- **Access to mental health support has seen a 4% increase over the past seven months** (Poll 6), from 18% to 22%. The use of virtual services online (8%, an increase of 7% since 2020) or via telephone (6%, an increase of 5% since 2020) has increased considerably since the onset on COVID-19. The percentage of Canadians who responded that they need mental health support but have not accessed it remains stable at 12%.

While high anxiety and depression continues to impact many Canadians, anxiety is slowly declining

- **This poll has seen some improvement in the mental health of Canadians:** with levels of high anxiety slowly declining, as well as a decline in the inability to handle stress, anxiety and depression and in the feelings of impairment leading to a loss of productivity.
- **Anxiety is not yet back to levels seen at the start of the pandemic and is nowhere near pre-pandemic levels.** Additionally, levels of high depression have remained steady over the past year with no signs of improvement. And only just over one-third feel they are handling their stress well.
- **Levels of anxiety and depression continue to be serious.** Despite the declining levels of high anxiety, those classified as having symptoms of moderate to severe mental disorders on the Kessler Scale, as well as symptoms of moderate to severe anxiety on the GAD-7 and symptoms of moderately severe to severe depression on the PHQ-9 scales has not changed.
- **Anxiety and depression are still having a negative impact on the lives of Canadians.** More than one-quarter continue to feel the negative effect of their mental health on their ability to function, one-fifth feeling a loss of productivity and one-tenth a loss of days.
- **A sixth of the Canadians have thought about suicide in the past year,** consistent to findings of Poll 8. This is even higher among younger Canadians, with more than a quarter having thought about suicide and 7% having planned an attempt in the past year.
- **One-fifth of Canadians have accessed mental health support** since the pandemic, continuing the slow upward trend since April. Those who have accessed these supports, either before or since COVID-19 have been satisfied with it.

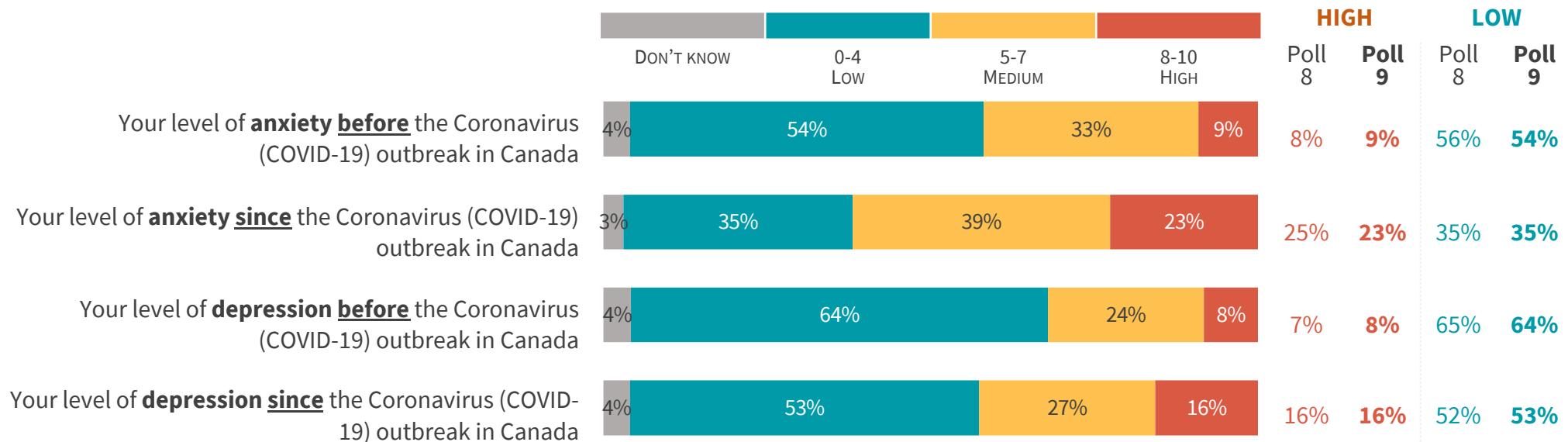
Nearly half of Canadians say that vaccine mandates are having a positive impact on their mental health

- **Nine-in-ten (91%) Canadians have received a vaccine**, with most having received both doses (88%). Of those who are not vaccinated, most are hesitant with almost half saying they will not get the vaccine (45%).
- **Vaccine status has a lessening impact on mental health***, with those not vaccinated feeling higher levels of severe self-reported anxiety (rated 9-10 12% vs. 9%) and depression (rated 9-10 11% vs. 7%), and scoring higher on the Kessler-10 (severe mental disorder 48% vs. 38%), GAD-7 (severe anxiety 8% vs. 4%) and PHQ-9 tests (severe depression 8% vs. 4%). However, this group is less fearful of contracting the virus (either personally or their family) and are less concerned about their return to the post-pandemic world (32% vs. 69% of those vaccinated). They are more likely to feel financial issues are having a negative impact on their mental health.
- **Only one-in-ten (11%) say the proof of vaccine mandate is having a negative impact** on their mental health, although among those who are not vaccinated, almost half (47%) are feeling this impact. Nearly half (47%) of Canadians say this mandate has a positive impact while one-third (37%) say it has no impact at all.

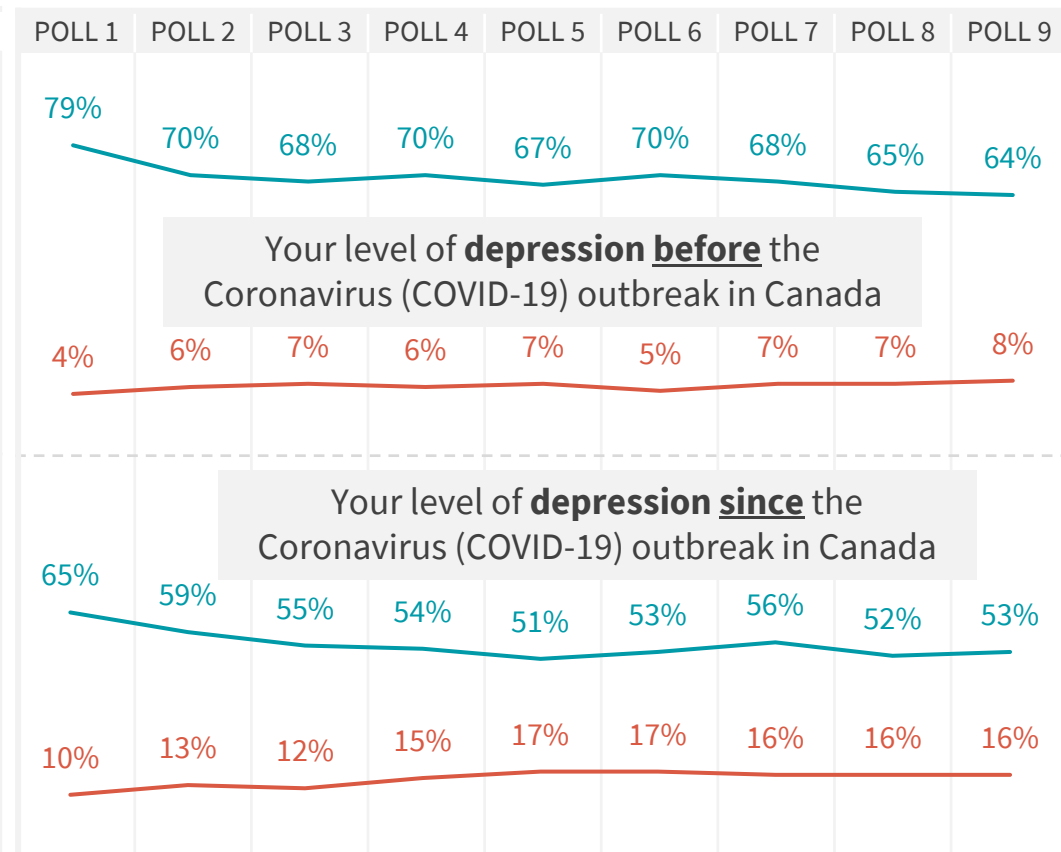
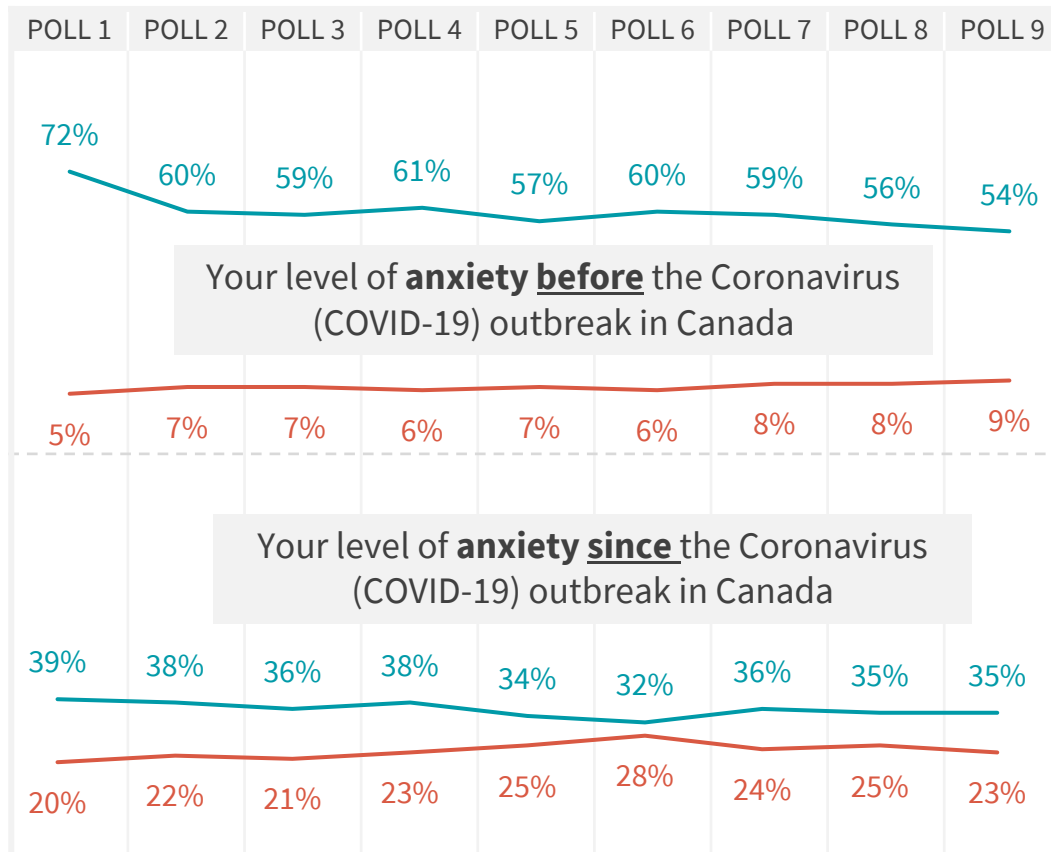
* Due to lower base sizes, particularly among the unvaccinated groups, not all differences exceed the margin of error.

Levels of high anxiety dropped slightly this poll, while high depression remained consistent

- Close to one-quarter of Canadians said they are experiencing high anxiety, which is slightly less than last poll but much higher than before COVID-19.
 - Anxiety continues to be worse for younger Canadians (16-17 33%, 18-34 30%, 35-54 24%, 55+ 15%), and those who are unemployed (35%). While Alberta residents continue to experience high levels of anxiety, it has declined since Poll 8 (27% -4).
 - Members of the LGBTQ2S+ experience higher depression (33%).
- The proportion of Canadians reporting high depression has remained consistent to Poll 8 findings.
 - Depression also continues to be worse for younger Canadians (16-17, 28%; 18-34, 21%; 35-54, 16%; 55+, 11%), as well as among the unemployed (26%).
 - Frontline healthcare workers have higher levels of depression (28%).
 - Members of the LGBTQ2S+ experience higher depression (26%).
- The percentage of Canadians indicating having had high levels of anxiety prior to COVID-19 has steadily increased since Poll 1.
 - This indicates that people may be remembering their level of anxiety differently over time, reflecting a possible recollection bias



Anxiety levels have declined slightly this poll, while depression levels have remained consistent

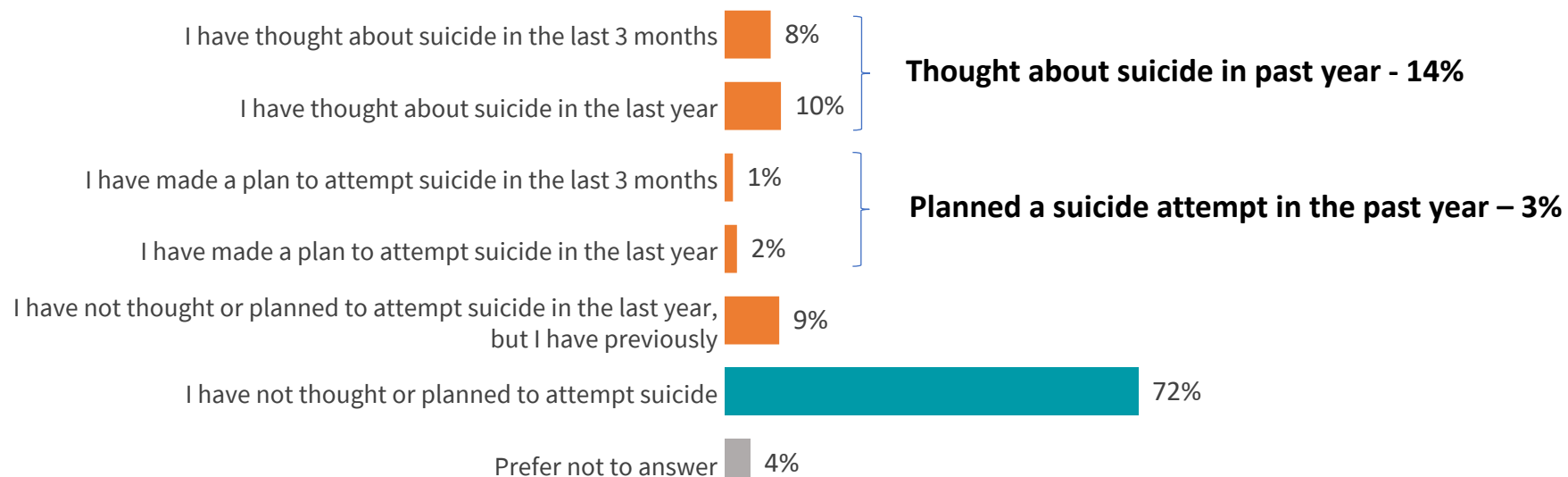


LOW
HIGH

Almost one-sixth of Canadians have thought about suicide in the past year

- **Thoughts of suicide are more predominant among younger people**, with 29% of 16-17 year olds and 27% of 18-34 year olds having thought of it in the past year (17% and 14% respectively in the past three months), and 7% of 16-17 year olds and 5% of 18-34 year olds having planned an attempt in the past year (4% and 3% in the past three months).
- **Thoughts of suicide are also higher among men** (16% vs. 13% of women).
- **One-quarter of frontline healthcare workers have thought about suicide** in the past year (28%).
- **Those who rate their anxiety and depression as high (rated 9-10) since COVID-19 have more thoughts of suicide.** Half (51%) of those with high depression have thought of it in the past year (36% in the past three months) and more than one-in-ten (11%) have planned an attempt in the past year (6% in the past three months). Of those rating their anxiety as high, 38% have thought about suicide in the past year (22% in the past three months) and 9% have planned an attempt in the past year (4% in the past three months).
- **In the LGBTQ2S+ community, 38% have thought about suicide in the past year** (27% in the past three months) and one-in-ten (10%) have made a plan in the past year (5% in the past three months).

THOUGHTS RELATING TO SUICIDE



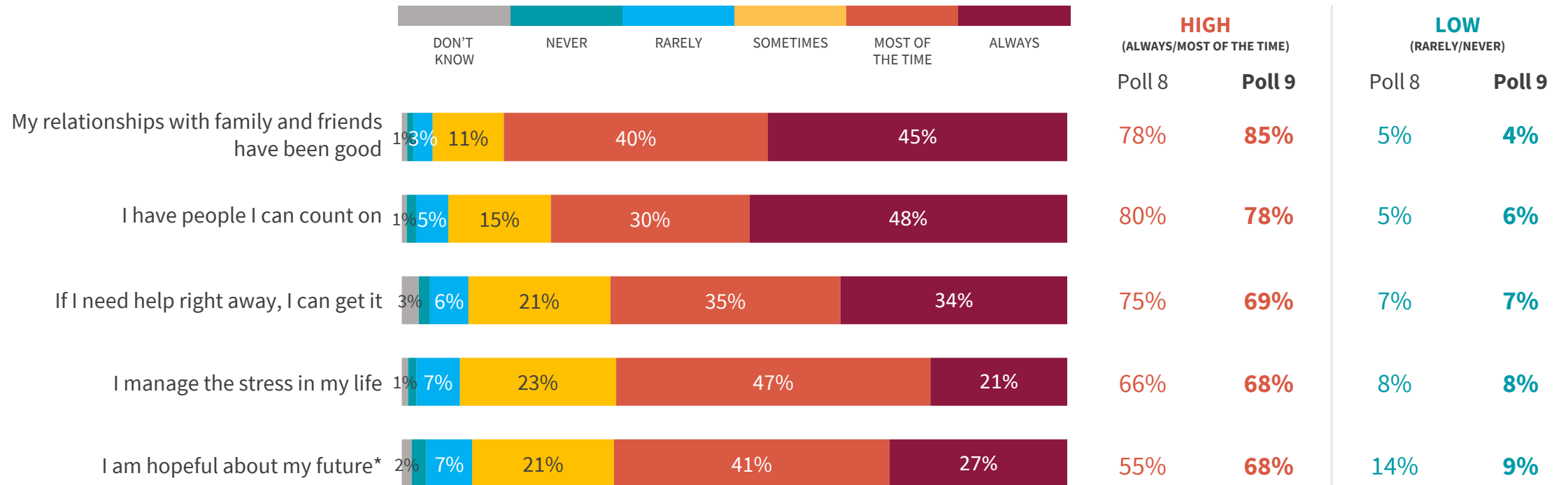
A15. The following questions may be sensitive to some people, but we have to ask the same questions of everyone. Base: (Total n=4,108)

The negative impact of the spread of COVID-19 has declined since Poll 8

- **As more Canadians are fully vaccinated, the fear of contracting COVID-19 saw a decline** this wave, with the fear of personal contraction dropping from 38% to 33% and fear of a family member contracting it dropping from 44% to 41%.
- **Social isolation continues to be the leading stressor on mental health.** Although this has seen a declining trend over the past few polls, this poll saw this score remain consistent, with 41% saying it has a negative impact on mental health.
- **Young people, aged 16-34, are feeling the negative impact of the pandemic on their mental health.** They are more likely to be concerned about the following: Catching COVID-19 themselves (16-17 39%, 18-34 39%), Family member catching COVID-19 (16-17, 57%; 18-34, 47%), and social isolation (16-17, 62%; 18-34, 45%). However, all of these have declined since Poll 8
- **While the economic downturn continues to have a negative impact on more than one-third of Canadians, this has decreased** since Poll 8 (from 41% to 38%). This continues to have the most negative impact on those in Alberta (44%) and on younger Canadians.
- **The impacts of all other economic factors (such as personal or family job loss, inability to pay bills and challenges of working from home) have all continued their downward trend** which has been evident since Poll 7.
- **Those who have not been vaccinated are more concerned about economic factors** than those who are (economic downturn 48% vs. 37%, possibility of losing job 42% vs. 35%, possibility of family losing job 39% vs. 32%).
- **Going outside and, to a lesser degree, reading books continues to have a positive impact on mental health,** this has remained consistent compared to Poll 8 (43% and 31% respectively).

Canadians are feeling more hopeful this poll

- Two-thirds of Canadians are feeling hopeful about their future, an increase of 13% over last poll. Additionally, 85% are now saying their relationships with family and friends have been good, up from 78% last poll.
- That said, there has been a decrease in the number of people who feel they can get help if they need it (69% down from 75%), with a similar percentage thinking they have people they can count on (78%).
- People in Quebec (78%) and those over 55 (76%) are feeling most hopeful. Canadians who are vaccinated indicate feeling more hopeful than those who are not (69% vs. 59%). Members of the LGBTQ2S+ are less likely to feel hopeful (58%) and less likely to feel they can get help if they need it (57%).

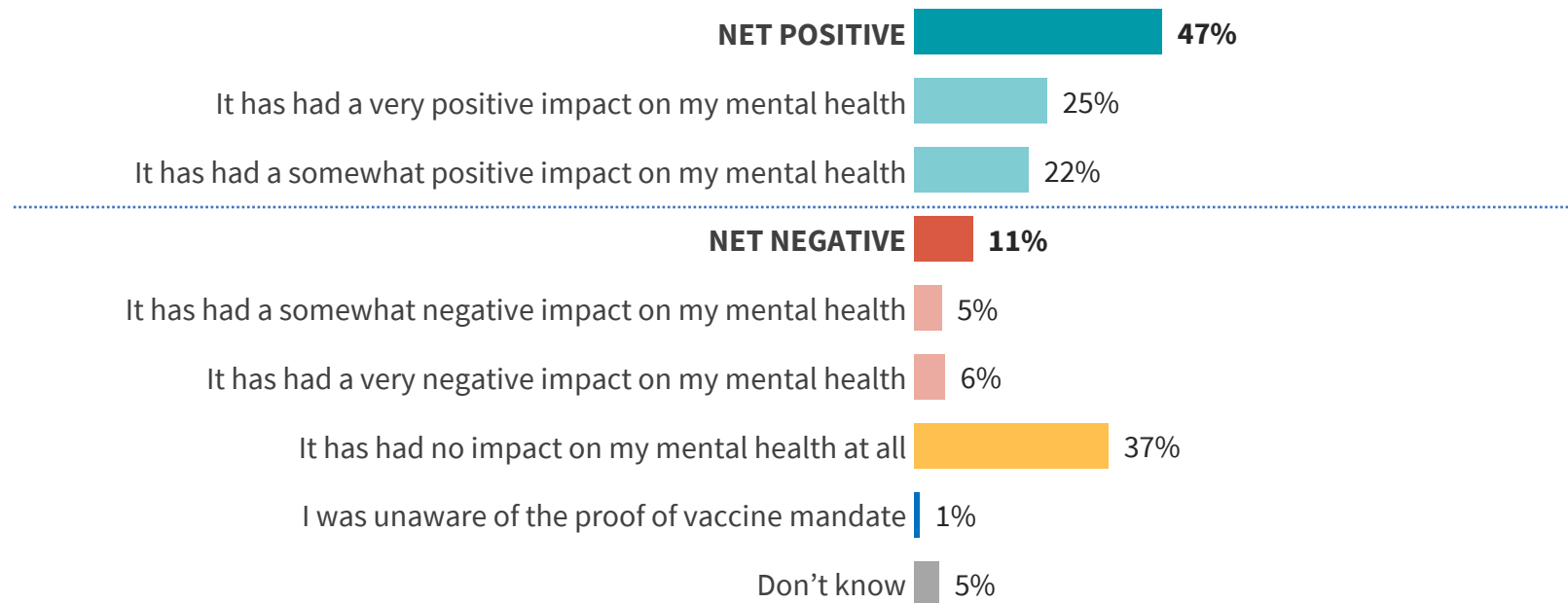


SCR20. Over the past 4 weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, how often have each of the following statements been true for you? Base: (Total n=4,108). *W8 wording: I have been hopeful about my future.

The need for proof of vaccination is more positive than negative when it comes to mental health

- Almost half of Canadians say the implementation of proof of vaccination in their province has had a positive impact on their mental health, with one-quarter (25%) saying it was very positive, and one-fifth (22%) somewhat positive. One-third (37%) say it has had no impact while one-in-ten say the impact has been negative.
- Older Canadians (55+) are most likely to consider this impact strongly positive (31%).
- Not surprisingly, those who have not been vaccinated are more likely to say this has had a negative impact on their mental health (47%) and 32% say it has had no impact at all.

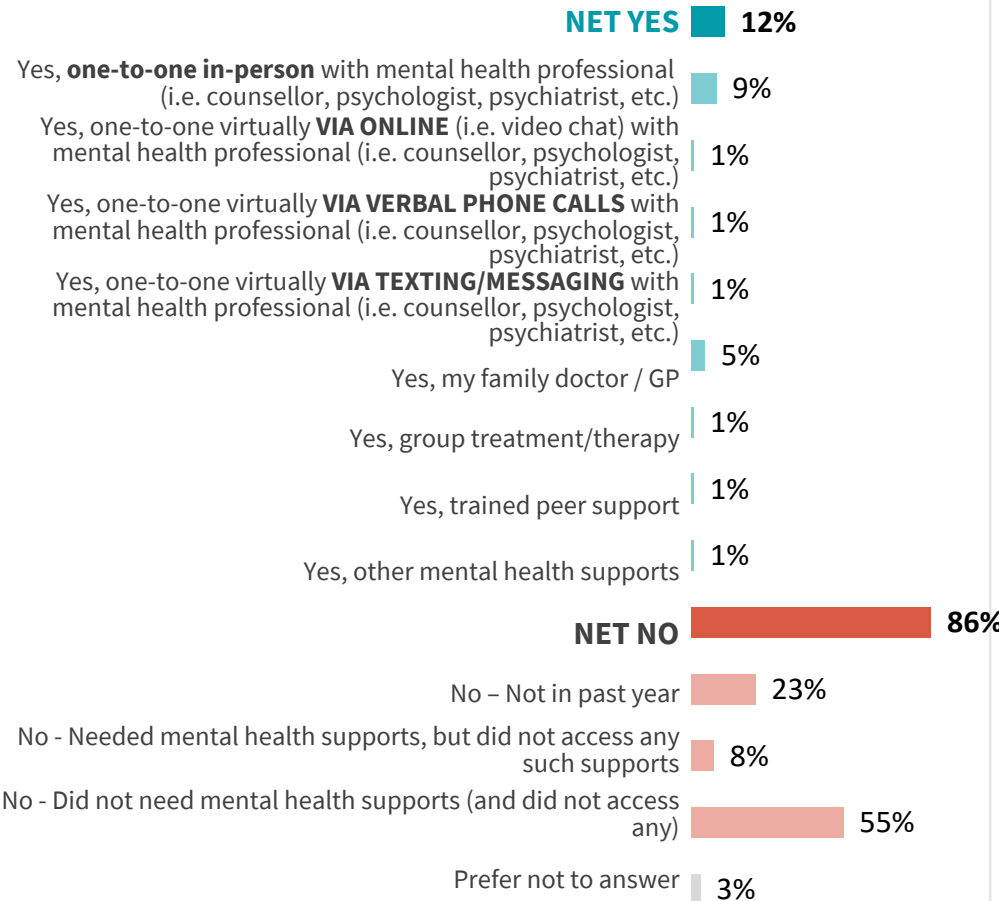
IMPACT OF PROOF OF VACCINATION ON MENTAL HEALTH



Access to mental health supports since COVID-19 has increased slightly

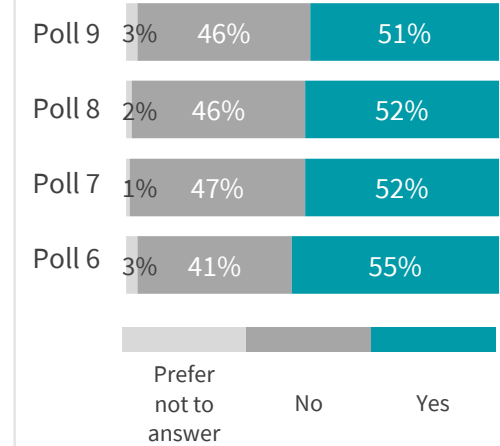
- In the year before COVID-19, 12% of Canadians had accessed mental health supports. This has increased to 22% (up 2% since last poll) in the year since the pandemic started. Of those who have accessed support since COVID-19, half (51%) are continuing to use these supports.

ACCESSED SUPPORT IN YEAR BEFORE COVID:



	Poll 6	Poll 7	Poll 8	SINCE COVID:	Poll 6	Poll 7	Poll 8
NET YES	11%	12%	12%	22%	18%	20%	20%
Yes, one-to-one in-person with mental health professional (i.e. counsellor, psychologist, psychiatrist, etc.)	9%	10%	7%	8%	5%	6%	6%
Yes, one-to-one virtually VIA ONLINE (i.e. video chat) with mental health professional (i.e. counsellor, psychologist, psychiatrist, etc.)	1%	2%	4%	8%	6%	8%	7%
Yes, one-to-one virtually VIA VERBAL PHONE CALLS with mental health professional (i.e. counsellor, psychologist, psychiatrist, etc.)	1%	1%	3%	6%	4%	5%	6%
Yes, one-to-one virtually VIA TEXTING/MESSAGING with mental health professional (i.e. counsellor, psychologist, psychiatrist, etc.)	<1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Yes, my family doctor / GP	5%	5%	13%	7%	6%	6%	6%
Yes, group treatment/therapy	1%	2%	4%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Yes, trained peer support	3%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Yes, other mental health supports	<1%	1%	3%	2%	1%	2%	2%
NET NO	87%	84%	84%	75%	79%	78%	78%
No – Not in past year				NA			
No - Needed mental health supports, but did not access any such supports	11%	8%	8%	12%	13%	13%	12%
No - Did not need mental health supports (and did not access any)	54%	56%	56%	62%	66%	65%	65%
Prefer not to answer	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%

WHETHER RECEIVE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS



Canadians under 55 are more likely have accessed supports since COVID (16-17 28%, 18-34 35% and 35-54: 24% vs. 55+: 11%)

B11. BEFORE the outbreak of Coronavirus in Canada, have you ever had mental health support from any health care professionals? (Total n=4,108)

B13. SINCE the outbreak of the Coronavirus in Canada, have you had any support from any mental health professionals? (Total: n=4,108)

B14. Are you currently still receiving these mental health supports? (Total: n=925)



Lesli Martin, Vice President, Pollara
Michael Cooper, Vice President, MHRC
Brittany Saab, Stakeholder Engagement, MHRC

