



Understanding the Mental Health of Canadians Through Covid 19 and Beyond: Poll #18



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Health
Canada

Santé
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Methodology



Methodology: This online survey was conducted among a sample of 3,207 adult Canadians. This was the eighteenth poll of this study (see below). Results between the polls are compared where applicable.

Weighting: National results have been weighted by the most current census data in terms of gender, age, & region to ensure the total sample is representative of the population as a whole.

National Poll #	Interview Dates	Number of Interviews	Margin of Error
1	April 22 to 28, 2020	1,803	±2.3%
2	August 21 to 31, 2020	4,010	±1.5%
3	October 22 to 28, 2020	2,004	±2.2%
4	December 10 to 18, 2020	2,761	±1.9%
5	February 1 to 8, 2021	3,005	±1.8%
6	April 20 to 28, 2021	4,005	±1.5%
7	June 7 to 13, 2021	4,010	±1.5%
8	August 17 to 24, 2021	3,010	±1.8%
9	October 22 to Nov 3, 2021	4,108	±1.5%
10	Dec 13 to 22, 2021	3,701	±1.6%

National Poll #	Interview Dates	Number of Interviews	Margin of Error
11	Feb 15 to 22, 2022	3,512	±1.7%
12	April 13 to 25, 2022	3,000	±1.8%
13	July 13 to 22, 2022	3,023	±1.8%
14	October 21 to Nov 1, 2022	3,500	±1.7%
15	Jan 23 to Feb 6, 2023	3,238	±1.7%
16	Apr 21 to May 3, 2023	3,494	±1.7%
17	July 27 to Aug 13, 2023	3,819	±1.6%
18	November 1 to 16, 2023	3,207	±1.7%

Poll 18	Number of Interviews	Margin of Error
British Columbia	422	±4.8%
Alberta	422	±4.8%
Prairies	328	±5.4%
Ontario	1065	±3.0%
Quebec	708	±3.7%
Atlantic Canada	262	±6.0%

Major Findings

- **As the holiday season approaches, two-fifths of Canadians (37%) are worried about not being able to manage the additional financial burden of the season.** Financial worries persist as a major contributor to mental health issues, with a comparable 41% of Canadians stating that the economic downturn has negatively impacted them.
- Canadians grapple with ongoing challenges related to food and housing security as nearly **one in four (23%) express anxiety about meeting rent or mortgage obligations. Additionally, two in five Canadians report concerns about food security** : 36% worry they can't afford healthy options for their families, and 4% are fully dependent on food banks.
 - Food and housing insecurity levels are on a concerning upward trajectory, with 6% (food) and 7% (housing) more Canadians expressing worry about these issues, compared to July 2022. This concerning trend highlights the rising difficulties experienced by an expanding segment of the population, particularly underscoring the disproportionate impact on younger Canadians.
 - **The prevalence of suicide ideation is notably elevated among individuals experiencing financial challenges with a staggering 41% of people in this group reporting having thought about suicide in the past year.** This is consistent with Poll 17 findings. In this regard, a **new 988 suicide crisis helpline** has just been launched across Canada.

Major Findings

- **Levels of self-reported anxiety and depression remain unchanged** at 11% and 8% respectively, these numbers have seen only marginal change since summer 2022. Despite showing signs of stabilization, anxiety and depression levels are still 57% and 33% higher than the pre-pandemic benchmarks, highlighting the enduring impact on mental well-being.
- Nearly half of Canadians have experienced a chronic pain issue – with half of those (27% of all Canadians) currently experiencing it. Notably, one-in-ten (11%) Canadians aged 16-34 report currently being affected by chronic pain.
 - Non-pharmacological pain management methods have decreased over the last five years (55% to 51%) with over-the-counter remedies taking prominence (54%). Additionally, **reported use of opioid management medications has doubled over the last five years from 5% to 10%**.
 - Suicide ideation rates are elevated among those experiencing chronic pain with one in four having thought about it in the past year.
- 15% of Canadians report having accessed mental health support in the past year, which is the highest rate since pre-pandemic.
 - About one-third (31%) of mental health service utilization is channeled through government-funded health systems.
 - In-person mental health services have been increasing with nearly half (45%) of people accessing exclusively in-person services. Canadians show a preference for in person mental health support (46%), followed by hybrid approaches (26%), encompassing both virtual and in-person elements.

High anxiety and depression rates remain consistent

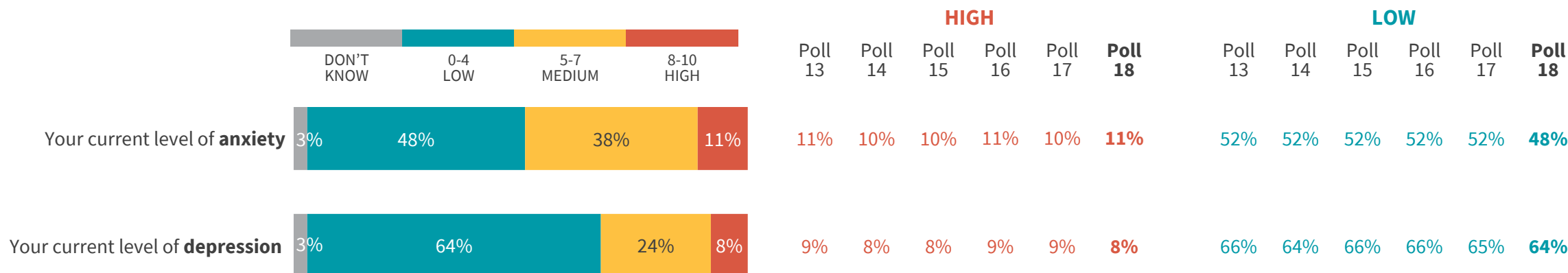
- A tenth of Canadians report experiencing high anxiety (11%) or high depression (8%), which has remained consistent since summer 2022 and continues to be higher than before COVID-19.

Likely to experience high anxiety:

- 2SLGBTQ+ (34%)
- Racialized people (26%)
- People with children under 18 years old (17%)
- Ages 18-34 (15%)
- Alcohol dependency (35%)
- Cannabis dependency (34%)
- Financial trouble (27%)

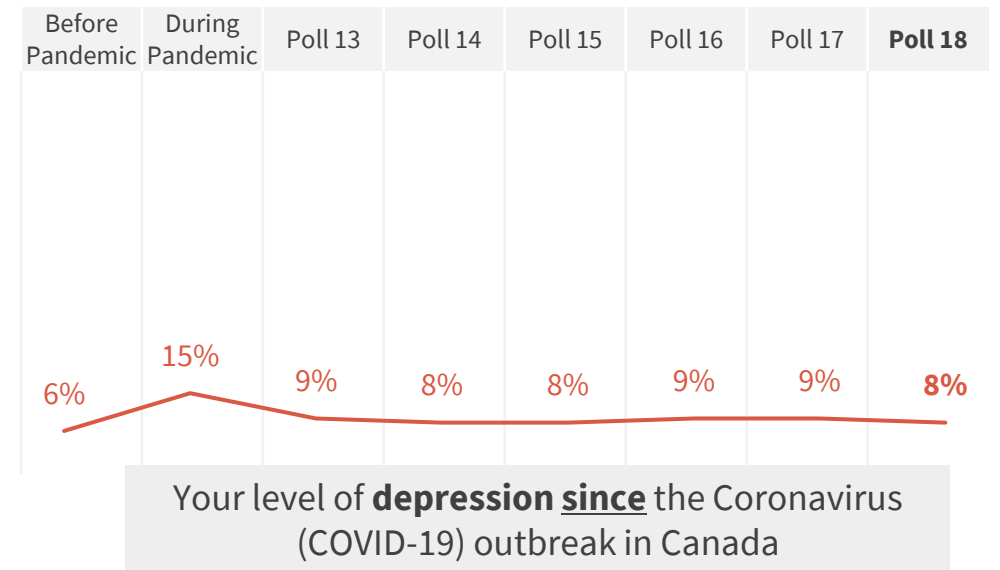
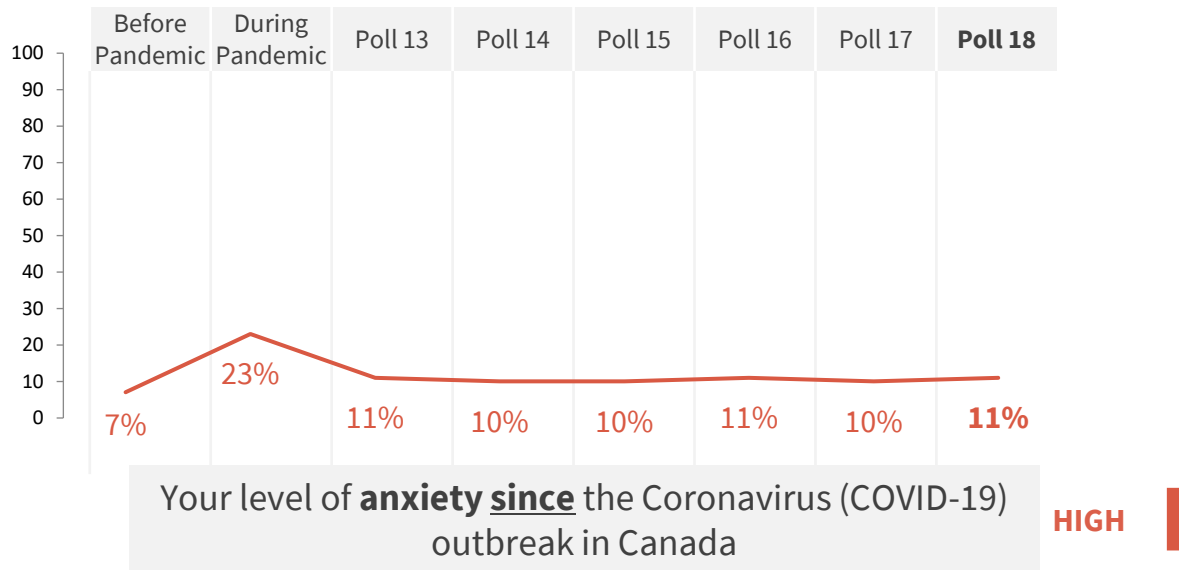
Likely to experience high depression:

- 2SLGBTQ+ (16%)
- Ages 18-34 (13%)
- Financial trouble (32%)
- Cannabis dependency (31%)
- Alcohol dependency (30%)
- Physical impairment (17%)



A2A. Please rate each of the following using the scale 0-10 where “10” is Extremely high and “0” is None.
Base: (Total n= 3,207)

Levels of high anxiety and depression have remained stable since summer 2022

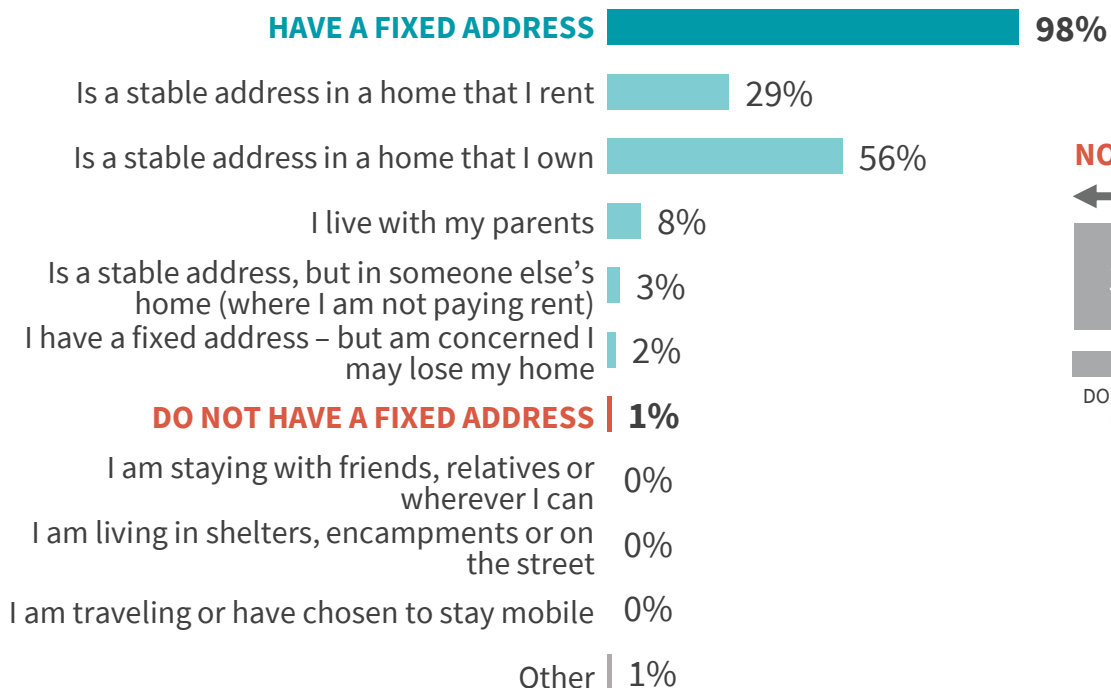


Polls 1-12 asked anxiety/depression levels since COVID.
 Poll 13-15 asked current level of anxiety/depression.

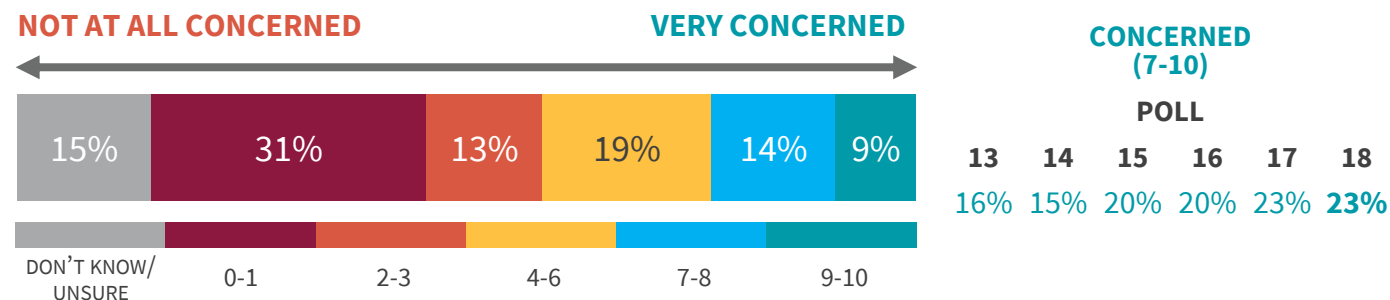
Housing concerns remain relatively high

- Concerns about monthly rent or mortgage payments have remained at a relatively high level (23%).
- Young Canadians are most concerned about housing payments (33% of 18-34 vs. 11% of 55+), as are those who have a mental health diagnosis (30% vs. 15% who do not), or racialized people (37% vs. 20% who are not).

CURRENT HOUSING SITUATION



RENT/MORTGAGE MONTHLY PAYMENTS



A22A: Which of the following best describes your current housing situation? Base: (Total n= 3,207)

A22B: How concerned are you about your rent/mortgage being paid each month? Base: (Total n= 2,722, Poll 17: n= 3,295, Poll 16: n=3,052, Poll 15: n= 2,821, Poll 14: n=2,992, Poll 13: n=2,579)

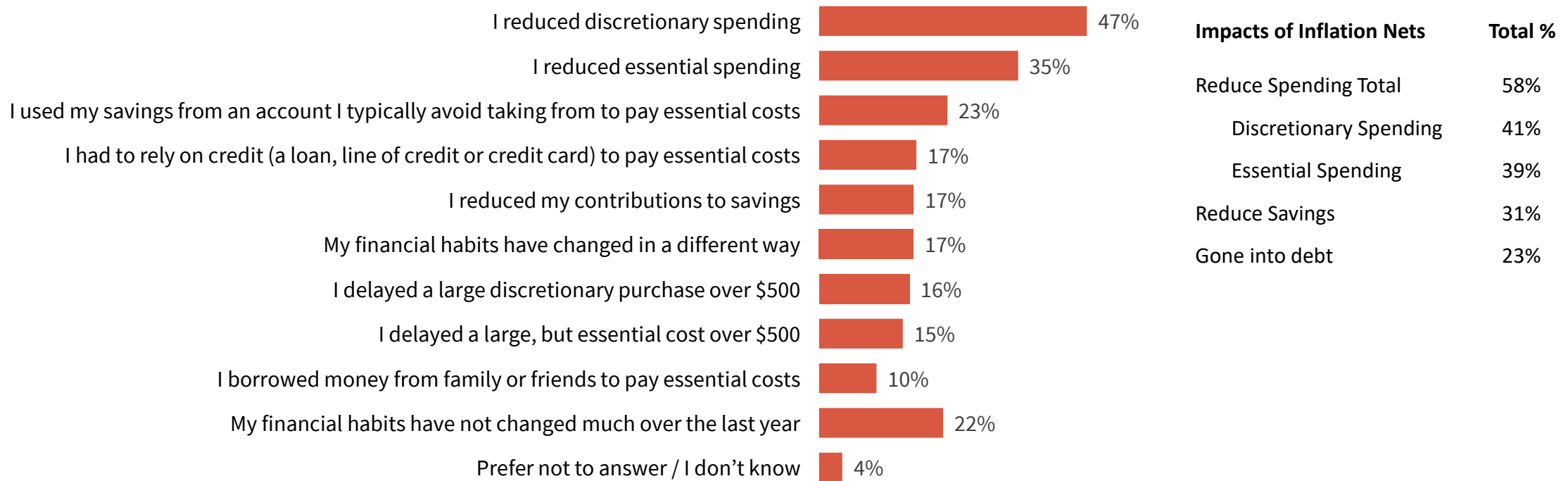
The percentage of Canadians worried they can't afford healthy food for their family has increased

- The proportion of Canadians with food insecurity concerns has been on the rise (40%, an increase of 3% since last poll). Either they're financially concerned about providing healthy food for their family (36%) or they rely on food programs (4%).
- Although Quebec continues to experience the lowest food insecurity, 31% are concerned or rely on food programs, up from 26% in Poll 17.
- **Profile of those with healthy food insecurity:** younger Canadians (18-34 47%, 35-54 44%), those with children under 9 (55%), unemployed (54%), racialized people (44%), those with a physical impairment (46%). The 2LGBTQ2S+ communities are increasingly worried about feeding their families (47%, an increase of 12% since last Poll).
- Those experiencing high levels of anxiety or depression (rated 8-10) are significantly more likely to experience food insecurities (59% and 58% respectively). Those who currently have chronic pain are also more likely to have food insecurities (42%).

	FOOD INSECURITIES					POLL		
		13	14	15	16	17		
I have no financial concerns about feeding myself and my family	57%	63%	61%	60%	61%	59%		
I'm concerned financially about sufficiently or adequately providing healthy food for my family	36%	30%	32%	33%	32%	34%		
I'm relying on one or more food programs (food bank, breakfast club etc.) to feed myself and my family	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%		
Prefer not to answer	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%		

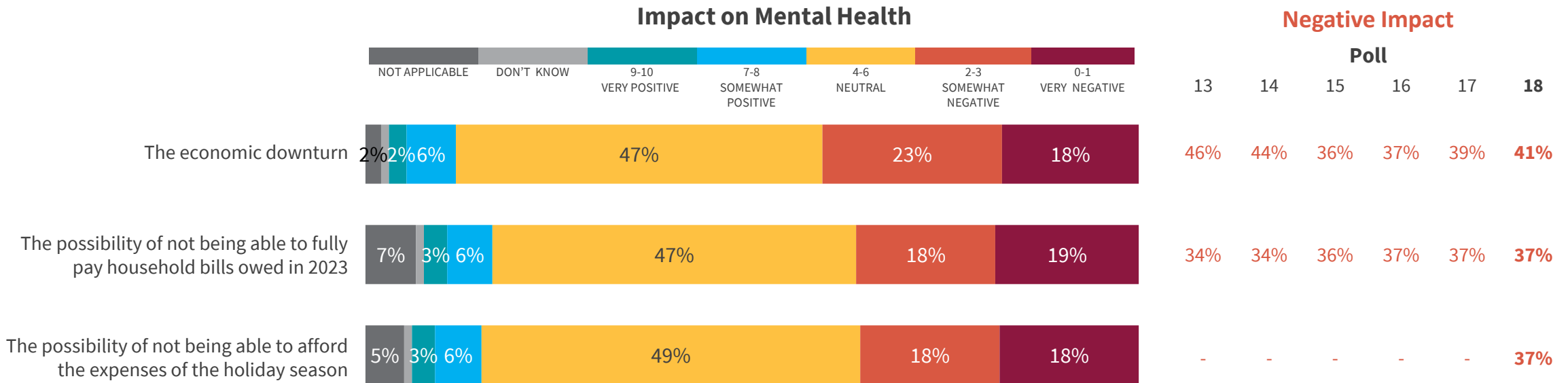
One in four Canadians have gone into debt due to inflation

- Four in five (78%) Canadians say that the effects of inflation has impacted their financial life in the past year, an increase of 5% since Poll 16 (spring 2023). One-third (31%) have reduced their savings, either by dipping into their savings or by reducing their savings contributions. Almost one-quarter (23%) have increased their debt, either by relying on credit cards or borrowing money.
- Those who rate their anxiety and depression as very high (9-10) are more likely to have gone into debt (50% and 49% respectively), as are those with a physical impairment (36%), younger Canadians (18-34 34%), 2SLGBTQ+ (33%), and those with chronic pain (30%).



The negative impact of economic issues on mental health is gradually increasing

- Two in five people (41%) report negative mental health impacts from the economic downturn. This has seen a gradual increase since Poll 15 (+5% since early 2023) but is not back to the levels seen in Fall 2022. Just over one-third have been negatively impacted by the possibility that they will not be able to pay all their bills or afford the holiday season this year (37% each).
- The financial conditions have had the most impact on younger Canadians (18-34 economic downturn 50%, inability to pay bills 44%). Those who have high anxiety or depression (rated 8-10) are also more likely to say this will have a very negative impact (economic downturn 44% and 37%, inability to pay bills 30% and 35%), as well as those with a severe mental health symptoms (economic downturn 35%, inability to pay bill 32%).
- Those who are dealing with chronic pain (economic downturn 24%, in ability to pay bills 24%), and dealing with a physical impairment (economic downturn 30%, inability to pay bills 26%) are also more impacted by these financial conditions.

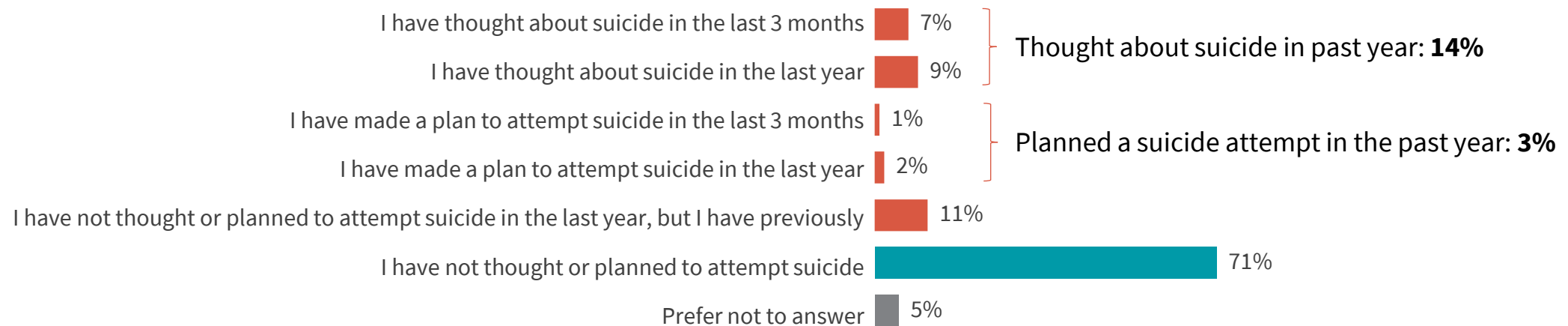


A3A. Please rate each of the following in terms of the impact they are currently having on your mental health: Base: (Total n= 3,207)

One-in-seven have thought about suicide in the past year

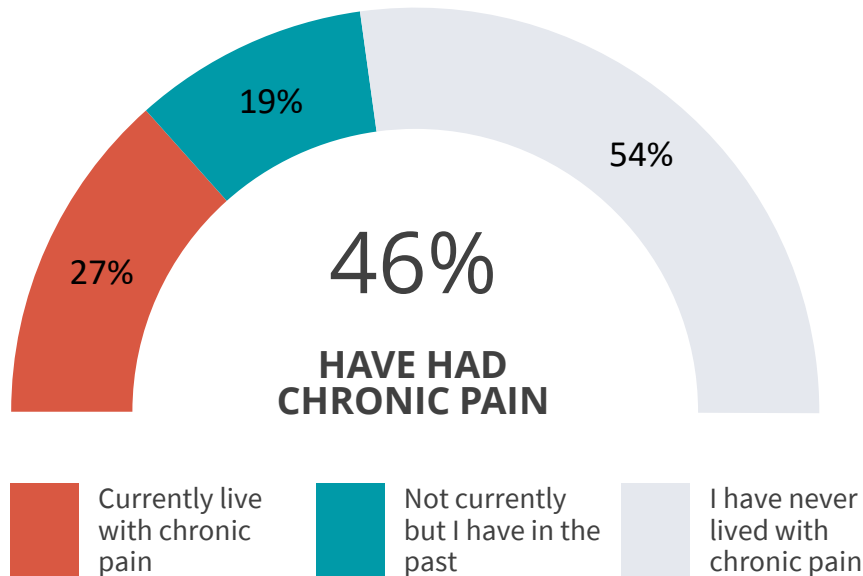
- Thoughts of suicide continue to be more predominant among younger people. These thoughts are particularly high among 16–17-year-olds (31%) and 18–34-year-olds (24%).
- Those with children under 9 are also more likely to have had thoughts of suicide in the past year (22%), and **in 2SLGBTQIA+ communities 37% have thought about suicide (an increase of 5% since last poll)** and 8% have made a plan in the past year.
- Financial instability is impacting suicide ideation. Those experiencing money problems being more likely to have consider it, especially those who are unemployed (25%), have an income below 30K (24%), have financial troubles (42%) or have gone into debt due to inflation (31%).
- Those who rate their depression as high (rated 9-10) have more thoughts of suicide. Almost two-thirds (62%) have thought of suicide in the past year, an increase of 8% since Poll 17 (fall 2023) and 14% since Poll 16 (spring 2023), and one-fifth (22%) report having planned an attempt. Of those rating their anxiety as high, 45% have thought about suicide in the past year and 14% have planned an attempt, a slight decrease.
- Additionally, those who are experiencing chronic pain are more likely to report having considered suicide (25%).

THOUGHTS RELATING TO SUICIDE

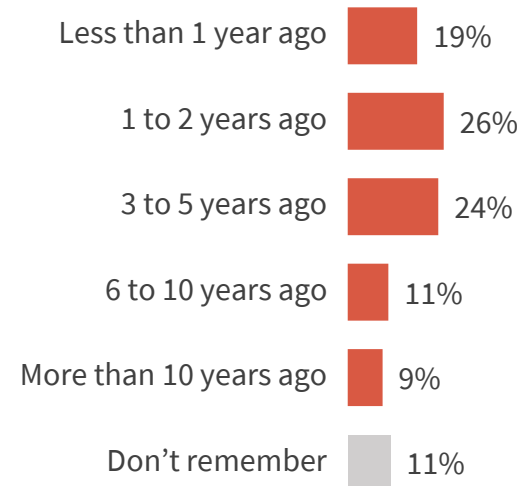


More than one in four Canadians are currently dealing with chronic pain

- Almost half (46%) of Canadians have had to deal with chronic pain, 27% are dealing with it currently and 19% have dealt with it in the past.
- While chronic pain is more common among older Canadians (36% are currently suffering), 11% of 16–17-year-olds and 11% of 18-34-year-olds are currently suffering.
- Current chronic pain is also more common among those with a possible cannabis disorder (38%), and those having financial troubles (48%).
- People rating their anxiety or depression as high (9-10) are also more likely to be suffering chronic pain (49% and 51%), as are those with symptoms of severe mental health (39%).



WHEN DID YOU LAST LIVE WITH CHRONIC PAIN



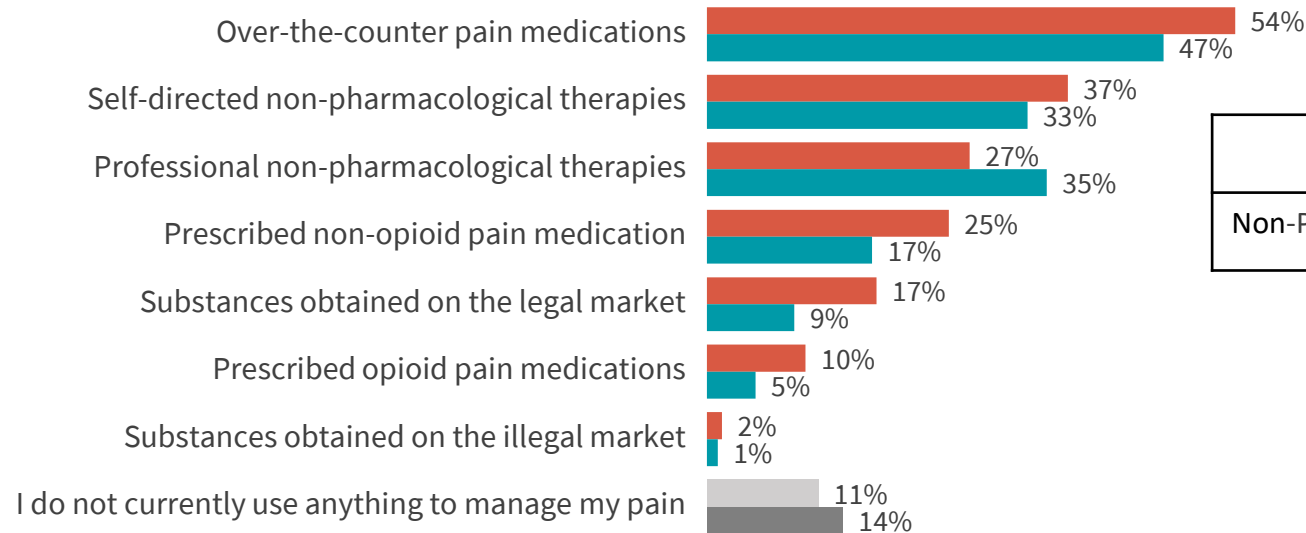
A10NEW1: Chronic pain is defined as pain that persists or recurs for more than 3 months. Which of the following describes you best? Base: (Total n= 3,207)

A10NEW3: When did you last live with chronic pain?(Total n= 600)

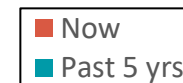
Medication use for pain management has increased significantly in the past five years

- Among those currently suffering from chronic pain, approximately half depend on over the counter (OTC) medications (54%) or non-pharmacological remedies (51%).
- The use of OTC medication has gone up, as well as the use of prescribed medication. 25% are currently using a non-opioid medication (vs 17% in the past five years), and 10% are depending on opioids (vs 5% in the past five years).
- On the contrary, the use of non-pharmacological remedies has gone down in the past five years. This is particularly true of professional non-pharmacological therapies, that only 27% are using now, compared to 35% in the past five years.

STRATEGIES TO MANAGE CHRONIC PAIN – CURRENTLY Experiencing vs Experienced in Past 5 Years



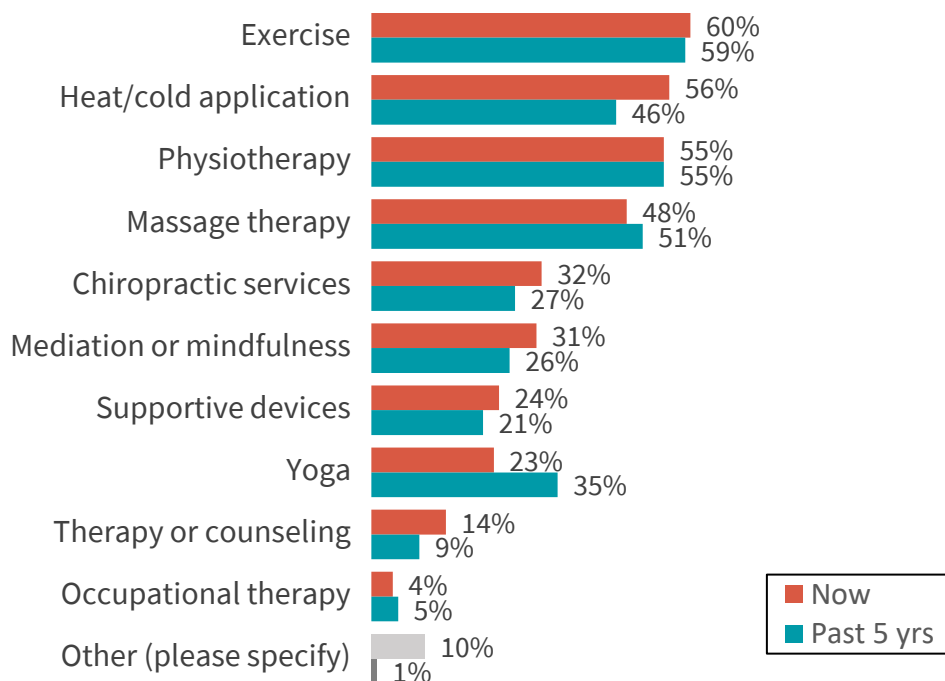
	Current	Past 5 Year
Non-Pharmacological	51%	55%



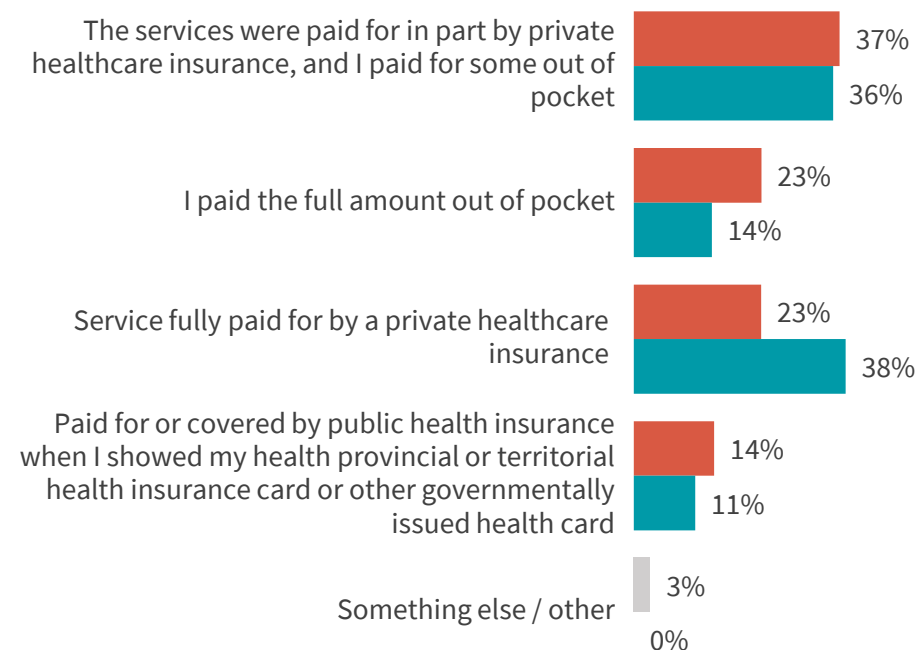
Those experiencing chronic pain are more likely to have to pay for professional non-pharmacological therapies

- One in four (23%) are now paying for these therapies out of pocket, compared to 14% who have used them in the past 5 years. Conversely, only 23% have the therapies fully paid for by private insurance, vs. 38% who accessed them in the past 5 years.

PROFESSIONAL NON-PHARMACOLOGICAL THERAPIES USED – CURRENTLY vs PAST 5 YEARS



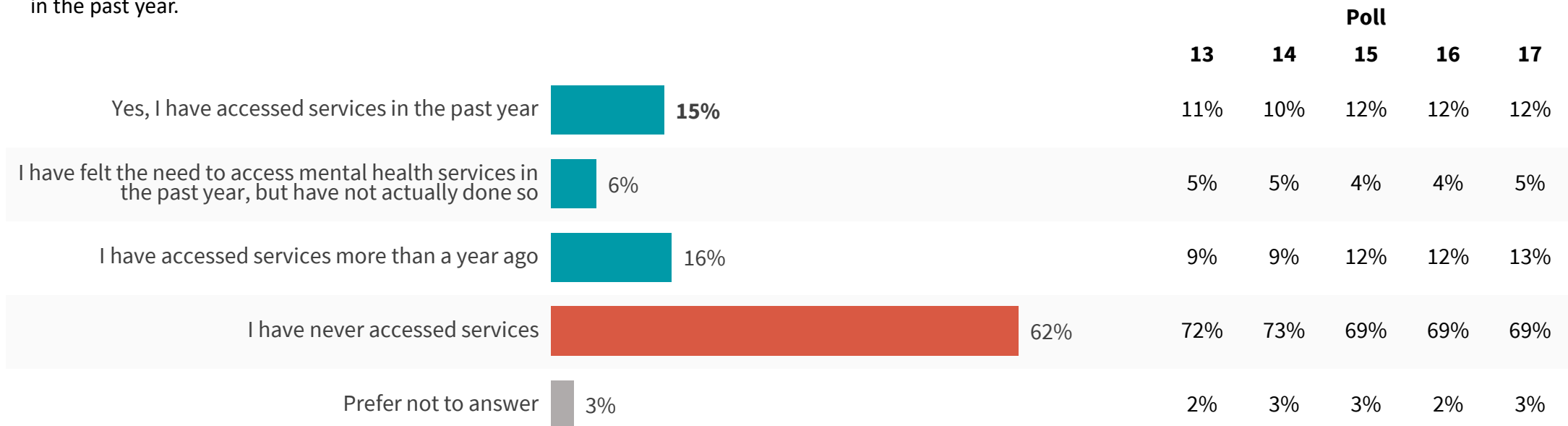
HOW THERAPY IS FUNDED – CURRENTLY vs PAST 5 YEARS



A10NEW4: You indicated using professional non-pharmacological therapies to manage your pain. Which therapies have you used? **A10NEW5:** Thinking of the non-pharmacological therapy you used, how are these services / resources funded? (Total Currently n= 240), (Total Past 5 Yrs n=202)

More Canadians have accessed mental health supports this Poll

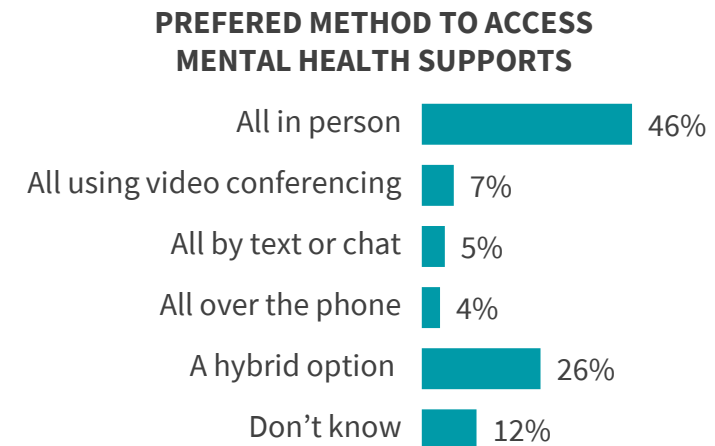
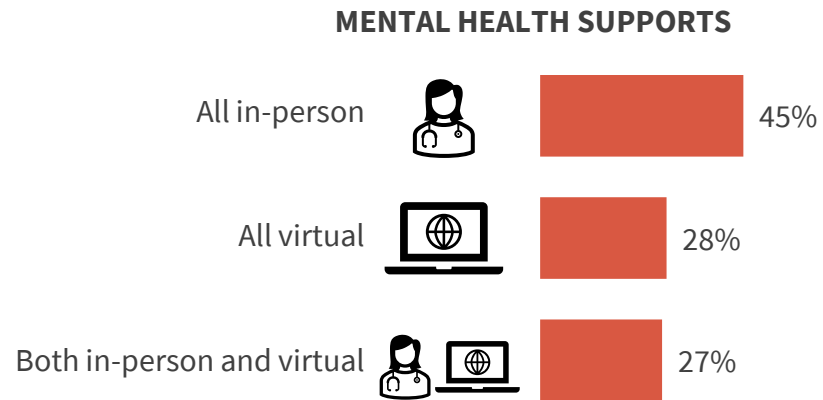
- Almost one in seven Canadians (15%) reported accessing mental health services in the last year, the highest rate since pre-pandemic. Another 6% thought to access it but didn't.
- 16% accessed services more than a year ago, with 4% between 1 and 2 years ago and 12% more than 2 years ago.
- Seven-in-ten (62%, a decrease of 7% since the last poll) reported they never accessed any mental health services.
- Younger (16-17: 21%, 18-34: 22% , 35-54: 18% vs. 55+: 8%), those who are unemployed (18%), self-employed (18%), students (22%), those on leave (34%), members of 2SLGBTQ+ communities (32%), those suffering from a physical impairment (24%), those with high self-rated anxiety (33%) and depression (32%); those with financial troubles (28%), those currently experiencing chronic pain (20%); and those who are possibly dependent on or alcohol (22%) are more likely to have accessed the mental health services in the past year.



B15. Have you accessed any kind of mental health or substance use service or resource in the past year? Base: (Total n=3,207)

Canadians are accessing a mix of in-person and virtual mental health supports

- Those who have accessed mental health supports in the past year are split as to how these supports have been accessed. Exclusively in-person has become more prevalent (45%, up from 39% in the last poll), followed by virtual only supports (28%) or a mix of both (27%).
- Canadians report preferring in-person support (46%), followed by a hybrid option (26%). Only 16% say they would prefer to get this support virtually, versus the 28% who obtained it in the manner.
- Those with high anxiety are more likely to use a hybrid method of support (36%), as are those with severe mental health symptoms (37%) and those suffering from chronic pain (36%).



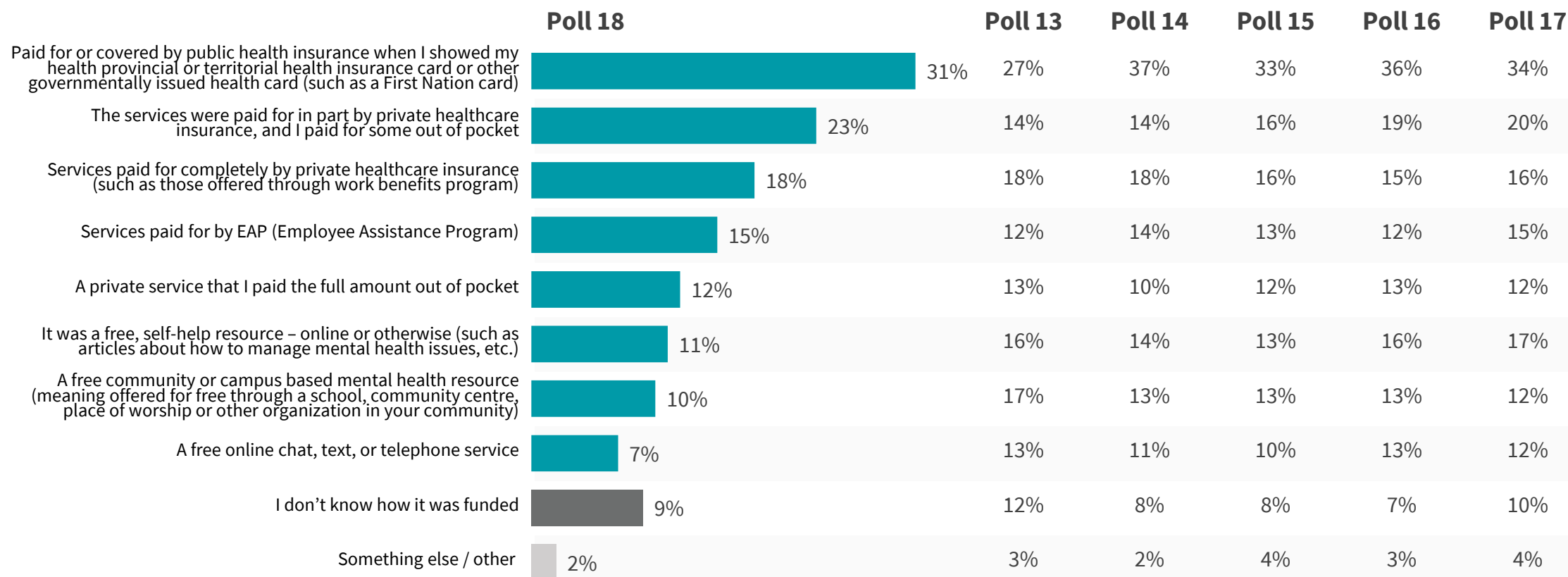
B23C: Are the mental health supports you access in-person (meaning you access these services face-to-face) or virtual (meaning over the phone, through chat, through a video call, etc.)?

Base: (Total n= 512) (Those who accessed services in the past year)

B30NEW: If you were in the need of mental health support, how would you prefer to access it? Base: (Total n= 3,207)

Use of publicly funded care and free care have decreased, while use of private insurance is up

- Of those who have accessed mental health support, three in ten (31%) use publicly funded services.
- At the same time, 18% paid through private insurance and 23% through a combination of private insurance and out-of-pocket.



B16. How were these services / resources funded? Base: Poll 18: (**Accessed services** n= 512), Poll 17: (**Accessed services** n=462), Poll 16: (**Accessed services** n= 488), Poll 15: (**Accessed services** n= 627), Poll 14: (**Accessed services** n= 368), Poll 13: (**Accessed services** n= 349)



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