



# Mental Health During COVID-19 Outbreak: Poll #3



November 2020

# Methodology

**Methodology:** This online survey was conducted among a sample of 2,004 adult Canadians. This was the third poll of this study, following a first poll conducted in April and a second conducted in August 2020. 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

Region	Number of Interviews	Margin of error	Number of Interviews	Margin of error	Number of Interviews	Margin of error
	Poll One April 22 to 28, 2020		Poll Two August 21 to 31, 2020		Poll Three October 22 to 28, 2020	
<b>National</b>	<b>1,803</b>	<b>±2.3%</b>	<b>4,010</b>	<b>±1.5%</b>	<b>2,004</b>	<b>±2.2%</b>
<b>British Columbia</b>	251	±6.2%	275	±5.9%	271	±6.0%
<b>Alberta</b>	252	±6.2%	273	±5.9%	270	±6.0%
<b>Prairies</b>	200	±6.9%	701	±3.7%	231	±6.5%
<b>Ontario</b>	701	±3.7%	826	±3.4%	801	±3.5%
<b>Quebec</b>	300	±5.6%	394	±4.9%	356	±5.2%
<b>Atlantic Canada</b>	99	±9.8%	1541	±2.5%	75	±11.3%

**Table 1. Poll Sample Size, Margin of Error and Field Dates, Overall and by Province**

# Summary of Major Findings



- **Being outside** is the best activity to support positive mental health, with 39% of Canadians indicating a positive impact on the mental health. This compares to a host of indoor activities that 9% to 29% indicate has a positive impact.
- Despite evolving Covid-19 case counts and restrictions, the number of people indicating a high degree of anxiety and depression has remained relatively stable since the onset of the pandemic. It became highly elevated when the pandemic and lockdown started, and has moved only marginally since then.
- The small group of Canadians who do not adhere or believe in Covid19 guidelines and restrictions indicate a high level of anxiety and depression. This group indicates that the primary driver of their negative mental health is economic concerns.



## Key Findings

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# Anxiety and depression remains high



- **The COVID-19 outbreak and restrictions led to an increase in both anxiety and depression and as time continues, this has not lessened.** In Poll 1, the proportion of Canadians reporting high levels anxiety quadrupled while depression doubled following the start of the outbreak. These levels have remained consistent over both Poll 2 and Poll 3.
- In August, we saw a decline in the **anticipated levels** of anxiety and depression if the lockdown continued another two months. As the country is in the second wave of this pandemic, this optimism has wavered, with anticipated levels of **high anxiety rising to 17%** (from 14%) and **high depression rising to 14%** (from 12%). Neither is back to the levels experienced in Poll 1 testing (22% and 16% respectively).
- **Levels of anxiety and depression continue to be serious.** More than half of the Canadians who report high levels of anxiety and/ or depression are likely to be classified as moderate to severe.
- Prescription medication is the **most common treatment** reported by Canadians diagnosed with a mood disorder. One-quarter are receiving therapy administered by a professional.
- **Far fewer Canadians are accessing mental health supports now than before the pandemic.** Not only are they less likely to be getting in-person support from a mental health professional, they are also less likely to be speaking to their doctor.

# Fear of contracting virus continues to negatively impact mental health



- In Poll 1, a **third of Canadians** reported that the fear that they may catch COVID was having a negative impact on mental health. Poll 2 and again in Poll 3, show a slightly higher number as **two fifths** of Canadians are reporting a negative impact on mental health.
- Canadians remain most concerned about family members, with half reporting that the concern for family continues to have a negative impact on their mental health.
- Poll 2 saw a deterioration of social support through family and friends. This Poll shows that these levels have remained stable – while there has not been a further decline, positive impacts of communication with family and friends has not returned to Poll 1 levels.
- The negative impact of the economic downturn has stabilized, after lessening in Poll 2, with the impact of the economic downturn and fear of losing their job remaining stable this wave. That said, there has been a **slight increase in the negative impact of not being able to pay their bills** in Poll 3.

# Positive MH supports continue to be less impactful



- Following the COVID-19 outbreak, Canadians reported that physical activity and engaging in reading and entertainment as having a positive impact on their mental health. By Poll 2, **the positive aspects of these activities had declined**, and continue at the same levels now.
- **The negativity of daily news about coronavirus has continued its upward trend**, with the number who say it has a negative impact on their mental health increasing by a total of +7 since Poll 1.
- While the levels of increased alcohol use has remained consistent in this Poll, **the levels of increased cannabis use has gone up +5%**. This is a trend worth watching.
- **Canadians are following the rules and regulations required to limit the spread of the virus**, with three-quarters saying they monitor the guidelines and do what is expected. Of those who do not, most say they monitor the guidelines, but do what they think is reasonable.



## Results in Detail

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# Anxiety and Depression in the COVID-19 Outbreak

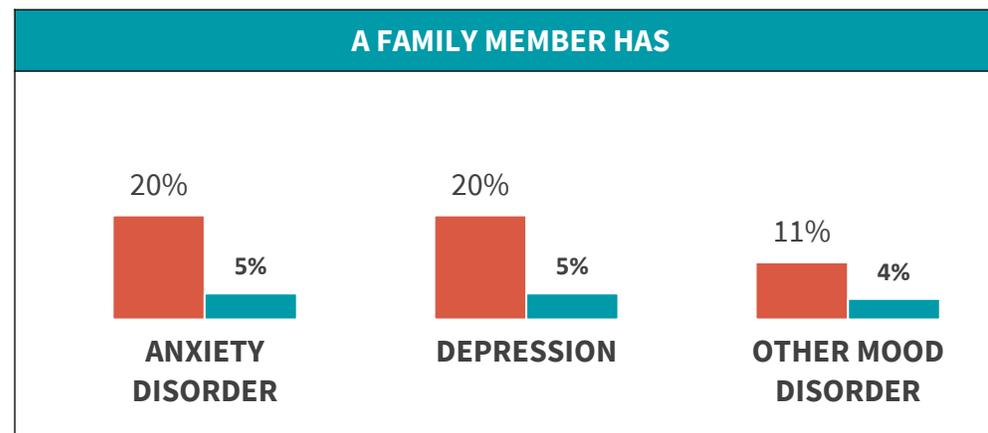
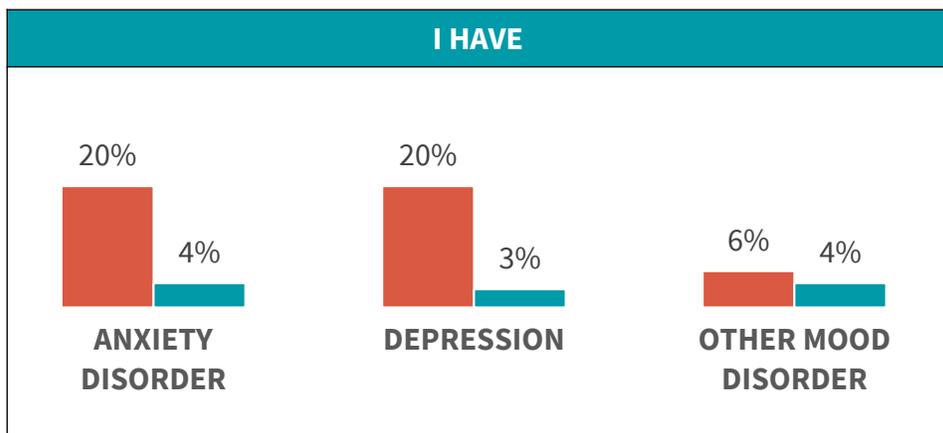
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# One in four Canadians have been diagnosed with anxiety or depression (1/2)

- Almost one quarter of Canadians have dealt with a personal or family diagnosis of Anxiety (24% personal, 25% family) or Depression (23% personal, 25% family).
- Other mood disorders are less common, with 10% having a personal diagnosis, and 15% a diagnosis in their family.
- In total, one-third of Canadians are dealing with anxiety (36%) or depression (36%) either themselves or in their family, while one-fifth (19%) is dealing with another mood disorder.



Base: (Total N=2,004)

A1. Have you ever, either before the Covid-19 outbreak or since it, received a diagnosis from a healthcare professional stating that you are affected by any of the following:



# One in four Canadians: Most vulnerable sub-populations (2/2)

- Canadians most likely to be diagnosed with **anxiety**:
  - Females (26% vs. 20% of males)
  - Younger (18-34: 31%; 35-54: 27%) compared to older (55+: 15%)
  - Canadians living alone (28% vs. 22%)
  - Atlantic provinces (29%) and Alberta (28%)
  - Front-line Healthcare workers (36%)
- Canadians most likely to be diagnosed with **depression**:
  - Females (26% vs. 21% of males)
  - Younger (18-34: 28%; 35-54: 26%) compared to older (55+: 17%)
  - Canadians living alone (29% vs. 22%)
  - Atlantic (28%); MB/SK (28%) or Alberta (31%)
  - Front-line Healthcare workers (34%)

TOTAL YES (Individuals + Family members)	
36%	ANXIETY
36%	DEPRESSION
19%	OTHER

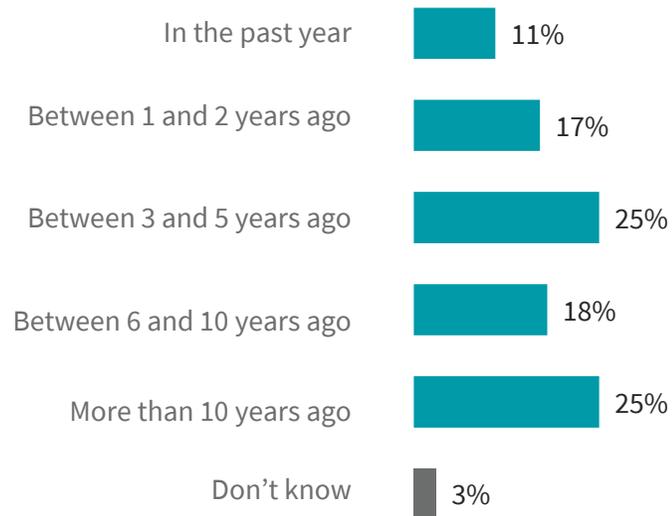
Base: (Total N=2,004)

**A1.** Have you ever, either before the Covid-19 outbreak or since it, received a diagnosis from a healthcare professional stating that you are affected by any of the following:

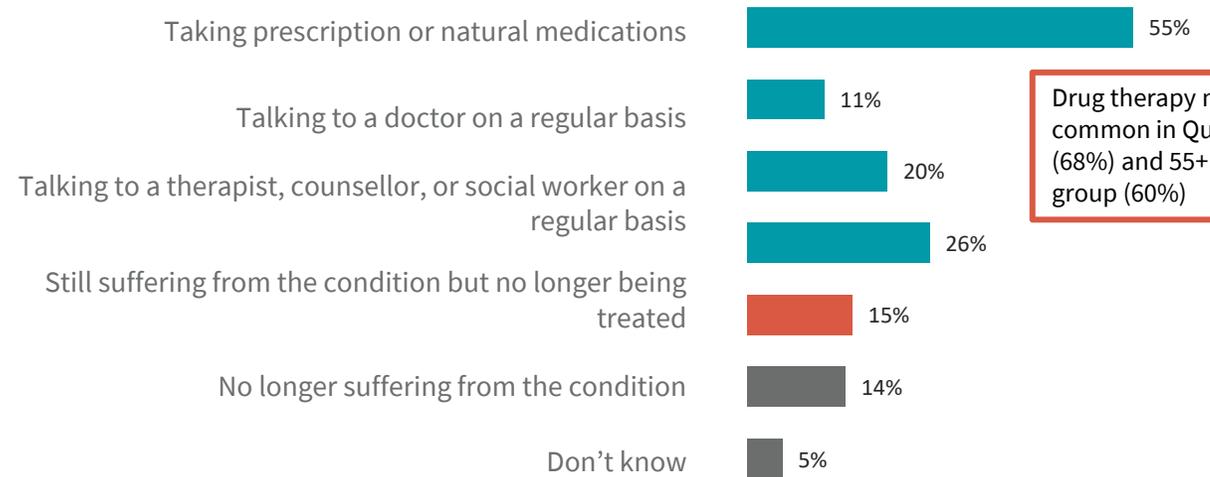
# Prescription medications are the most common form of treatment

- More than **one-quarter (28%)** of those who received a mental health diagnosis before Covid-19 received it in the past two years, with one-in-ten receiving it in the past year.
- **Two-thirds (64%)** of those who have had a personal or family diagnosis are doing something to treat the condition, with prescription medication being most common (55%), and one-quarter talking to a therapist (26%). Whether or not they have benefits to cover mental health treatments does not impact the treatments they are getting.

## LENGTH OF TIME SINCE DIAGNOSIS



## TREATING MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

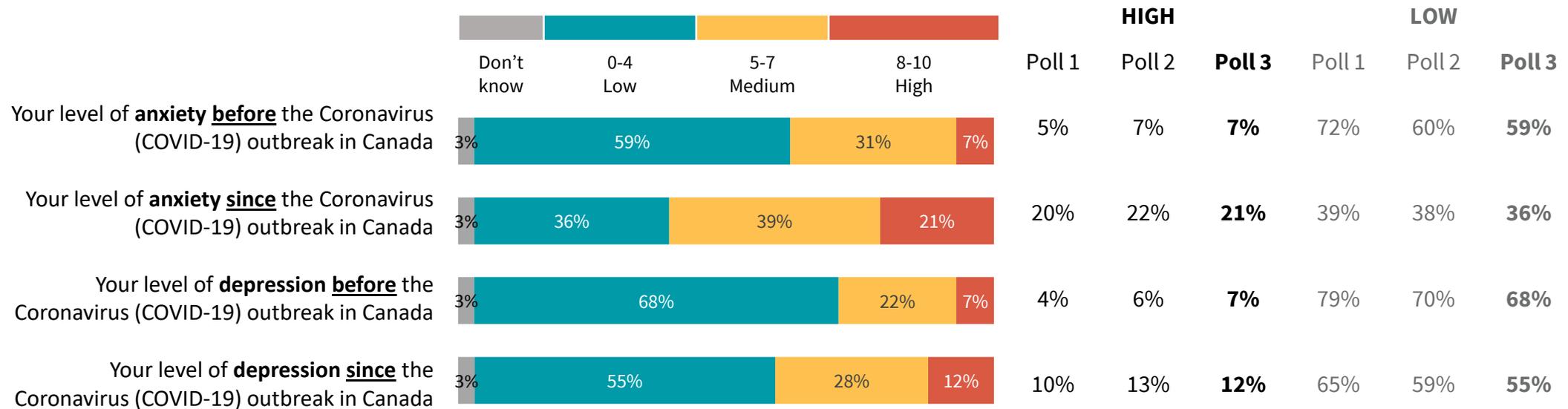


Drug therapy more common in Quebec (68%) and 55+ age group (60%)

**A1C.** When did you/your family member receive the latest diagnosis of anxiety, depression or another mood disorder? Base: (Those who received diagnosis before COVID-19 n=841)  
**A1D.** What, if anything, are you/your family member currently doing to treat the anxiety, depression or other mood disorder? (Base: Those who have received a diagnosis n=957)

# Anxiety levels remain three times as high as pre outbreak levels (1/2)

- Following the COVID-19 outbreak, the proportion of Canadians reporting high levels of anxiety increased from 5% to 20%. As time has continued, **21% still say they have high anxiety.**
- The proportion of Canadians reporting high depression doubled following the COVID outbreak (12%) and remains at this level.



A2A. Please rate each of the following using the scale 0-10 where “10” is Extremely high and “0” is None. Base: (Total N=2,004)

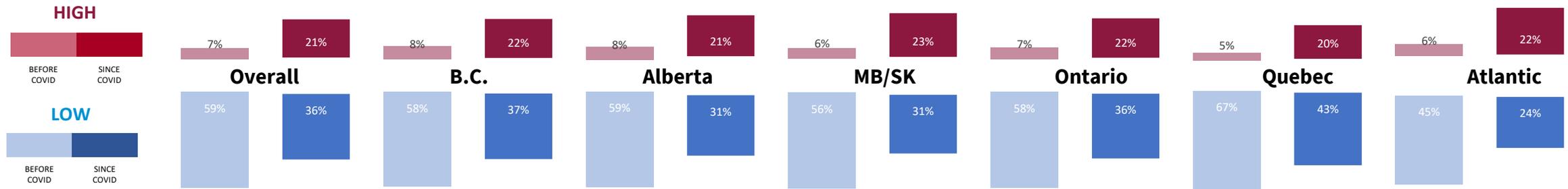
# Anxiety levels remain high: vulnerable sub-populations (2/2)



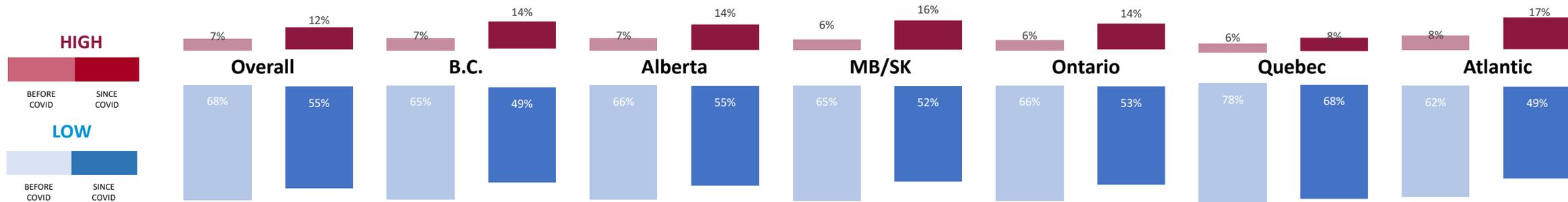
- Among **front line workers**, levels of anxiety since the pandemic are only slightly higher (29%) but levels of depression are significantly higher (24%).
- **Post COVID anxiety (8-10)**: At this stage of the pandemic, anxiety is highest among 18-34 year olds (31% vs 24% 35-54 year olds, 13% 55+) and women (26% vs. 17% of men).
- **Post COVID depression (8-10)**: Depression is also highest among 18-34 year olds (19% vs. 13% 35-54 year olds and 8% 55+). Also highest among those who do not follow the government restrictions (particularly those who rate their depression 10 – 7% vs. 1% of those who try to follow guidelines and 2% of those who do follow guidelines)

# Levels of anxiety and depression are similar across the country

## ANXIETY DISORDER



## DEPRESSION



# Those reporting high levels of depression /anxiety classify as moderate or severe using Kessler 10

- A majority of Canadians who indicate that they have high levels of depression or anxiety since COVID-19 are likely to be classified as **moderate (26%) to severe (36%)**, using the Kessler 10 test.
- **Less than a fifth (18%)** of those who feel they have a high level of stress or depression are likely to be classified as having no mental health condition.

Psychological Distress 1-5 Point Scale Items*	(All/Most)	(None/Little)
Nervous	46%	22%
Tired out for no good reason	45%	23%
That everything was an effort	36%	34%
Depressed	33%	35%
Restless or fidgety	28%	39%
Worthless	26%	49%
Hopeless	25%	46%
So sad that nothing could cheer you up	19%	51%
So restless you could not sit still	18%	64%
So nervous that nothing could calm you down	11%	64%

Mental Health Score		
Poll 2	Poll 3	
21%	18%	Likely to have <b>no mental</b> health disorder (10-20)
16%	19%	Likely to have a <b>mild</b> mental disorder (20-24)
21%	26%	Likely to have <b>moderate</b> mental disorder (25-29)
42%	36%	Likely to have <b>severe</b> mental disorder (30-50)

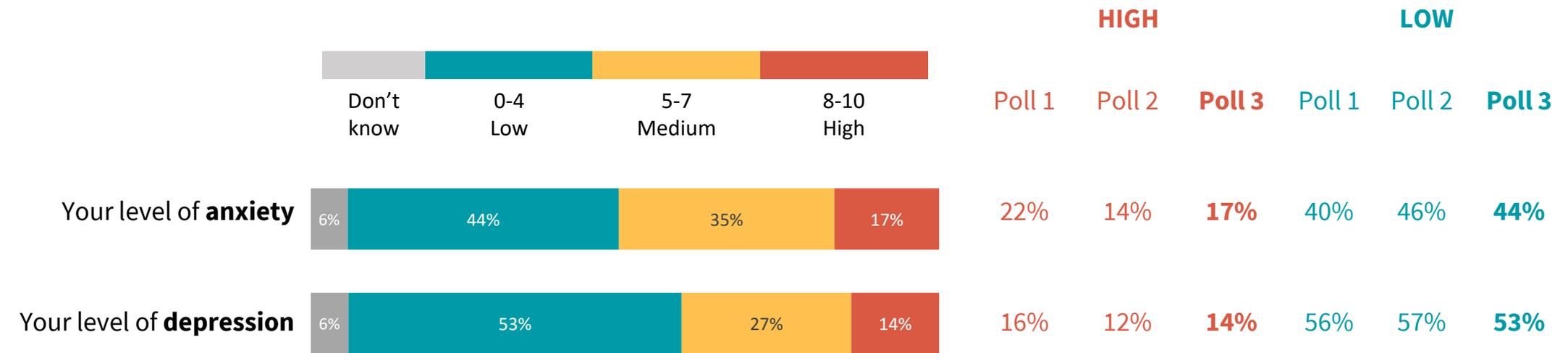
\* Based on the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale – for full data see Appendix

# Optimism about mental health if social isolation continues is starting to erode (1/2)

- Following the outbreak, a fifth (22%) of Canadians expected their anxiety levels to be high after two months of isolation. Several months into the pandemic, only 14% (a decrease of 8%) expect that after two more months of isolation their anxiety will be high. As the pandemic continues however, there has been a slight increase in the number who feel their anxiety will be high in two months' time (17%).
- Similarly, while the number who expected to have high depression decreased in Poll 2 by 4%, it increased by 2% in this poll with a total of 14%.
- Canadians **aged below 55** (18-34: 21%; 35-54: 19%; 55+: 11%) are more likely to have an expectation of increased anxiety if they must isolate for another two months. This age group is also more likely to have high depression (18-34: 19%; 35-54: 16%; 55+: 9%).
- Those **who do not monitor guidelines** are more likely to rate their anticipated anxiety (29% vs. 18% of those who try to follow and 16% of those who do follow) and depression (25% vs. 15% of those who try to follow and 12% of those who do follow) as high.
- **Frontline HC workers** are more likely to rate their anxiety (26%) and depression (23%) as high if social isolation continues for another 2 months.

# Optimism about mental health if social isolation continues is starting to erode (2/2)

IF SOCIAL ISOLATION CONTINUES FOR 2 MORE MONTHS, WHAT DO YOU EXPECT...

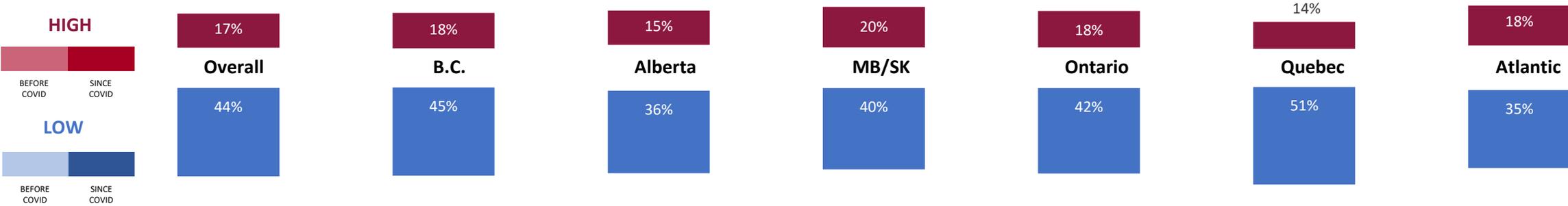


**A2C.** And, using the scale below... if COVID-19 – and the associated government guidelines and laws (ex. social distancing, social bubbles/circles, masks, quarantines, etc.) – remains in your province for 2 more months... what do you expect the following to be? Base: (Total N=2,004)

# Quebec expects the lowest levels of anxiety, Prairies and Ontario most likely to be facing depression, if social isolation continues.



## ANXIETY DISORDER



## DEPRESSION



A2A. Please rate each of the following using the scale 0-10 where “10” is Extremely high and “0” is None. Base: (Total N=2,004)



# Impacts on Mental Health

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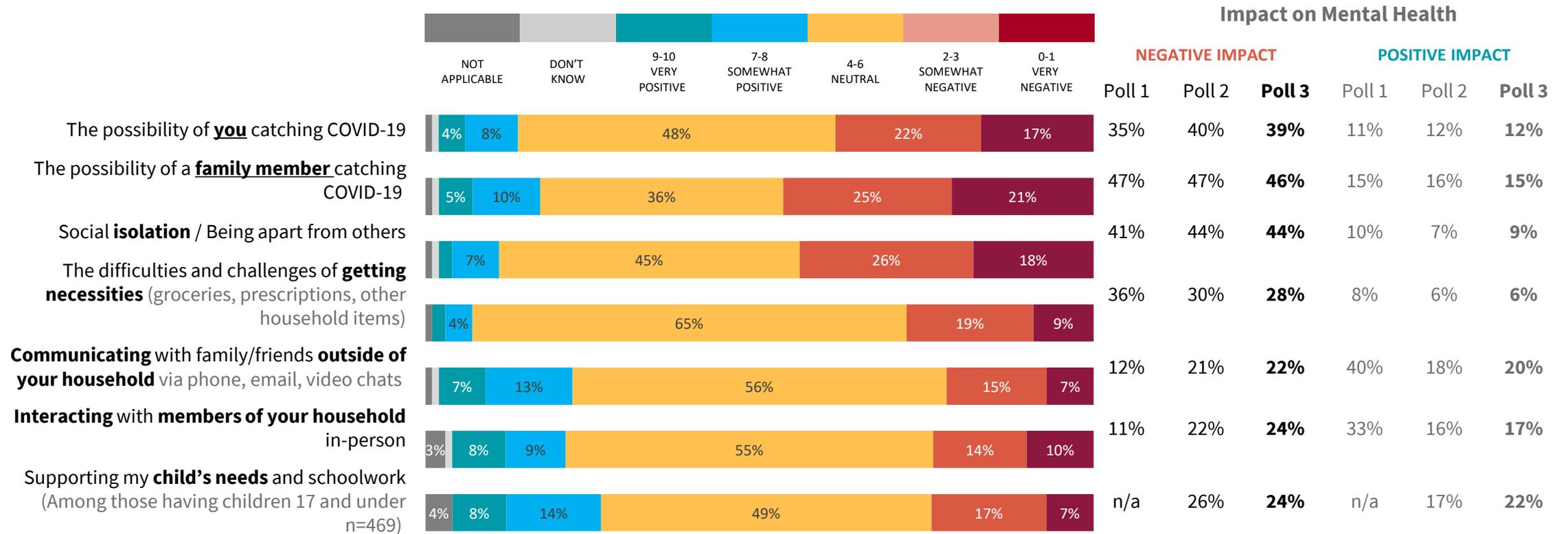
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# Fear of the spread of COVID-19 and social isolation continue to have a negative impact on mental health (1/2)



- Two-fifths (39%) of Canadians say concerns about contracting COVID-19 is having a negative impact on their health while close to half (46%) remain concerned about a family member contracting COVID-19. Results are on par with Poll 2 findings.
- In the early stages of the outbreak, Canadians reported that **communication with friends/ family outside and inside the home** had a positive impact on mental health, but Poll 2 saw an increase in **the negative impact of these interactions**. Poll 3 saw a continuation of this trend, with 22% saying communication with those outside the home and 24% with those in the home are having a negative impact.
- The challenges of getting necessities continues to have less impact, with 28% saying it has a negative impact on mental health (-2 from Poll 2, and -8 from Poll 1).
- While those **who do not monitor the guidelines** expect more depression and anxiety, they are less concerned about themselves (29%) or their family (38%) catching the virus, but are more impacted by the difficulties of obtaining necessities (41%)

# Fear of the spread of COVID-19 and social isolation continue to have a negative impact on mental health (2/2)



A3A. During the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in Canada, please rate each of the following in terms of the impact they are currently having on your mental health, if any: Base: (Total N=2,004)

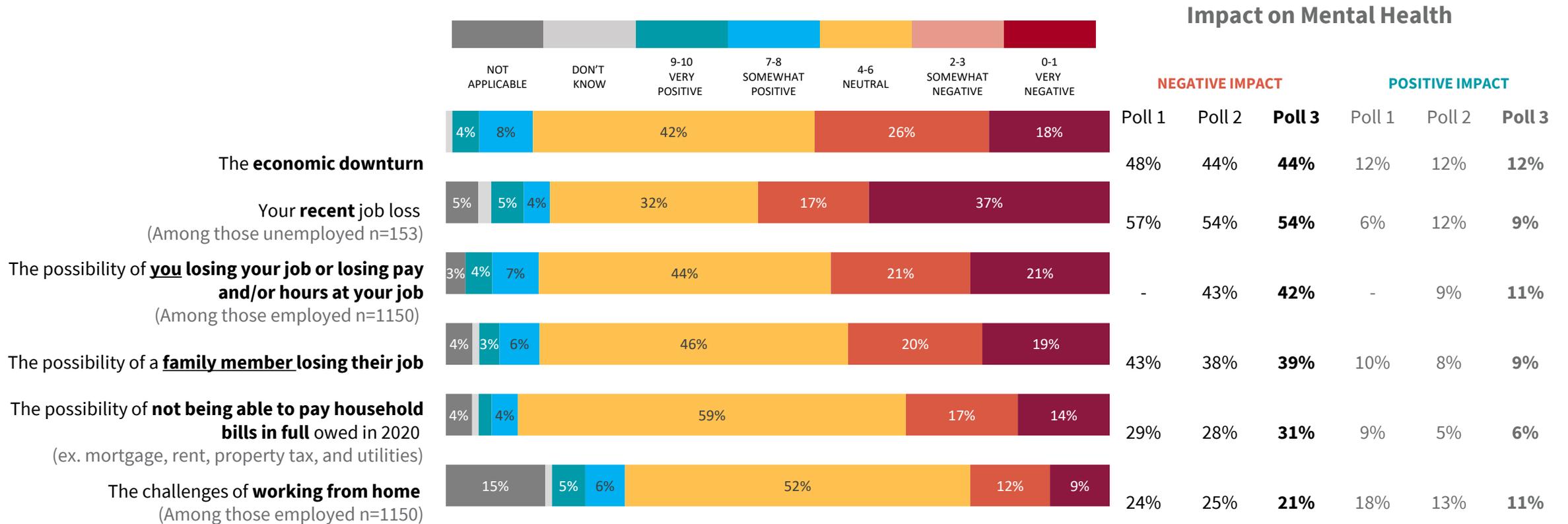
# Economic downturn and job loss continue to have a negative impact on mental health for many Canadians (1/2)



- While Poll 2 saw a slight decline in the negative impact the financial situation is having on Canadians, this Poll saw these numbers stabilize.
- Two-fifths continue to feel that the economic downturn (44%) and the possibility of them (42%) or their family (39%) losing their jobs had a negative impact on their mental health, similar to Poll 2 findings.
- One-in-three say the worry of not being able to pay their bills is having a negative impact (31%), up slightly (+3) from Poll 2.
- Canadians **who are working from home** are less likely to say this is having a negative impact (21% -4) but are also less likely to say the impact is positive (11% -2).
- While those **who do not monitor the guidelines** are more concerned about economic downturn (56%)

- **A3A.** During the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in Canada, please rate each of the following in terms of the impact they are currently having on your mental health, if any: Base: (**Total** N=2,004)

# Economic downturn and job loss continue to have a negative impact on mental health for many Canadians (2/2)



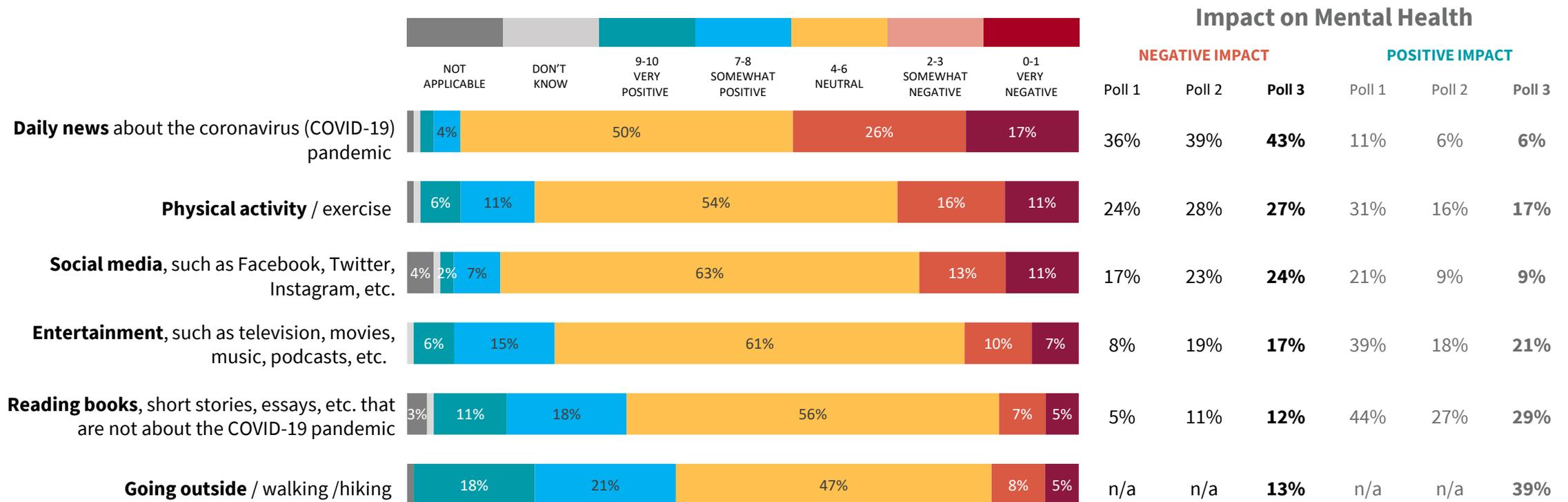
**A3A.** During the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in Canada, please rate each of the following in terms of the impact they are currently having on your mental health, if any: Base: (Total N=2,004)

## The positive impact of activities on mental health has stabilized after a decline in Poll 2 (1/2)



- Poll 2 saw a decline in those who felt activities such as physical activity, social media, entertainment, and books were having a positive impact on their mental health. These numbers remained stable in Poll 3, with one-quarter of Canadians saying physical activity (27%) and social media (24%) are having a negative impact. While entertainment and books are more likely to have a positive than negative impact, this is still down from Poll 1 findings (21% and 29% respectively).
- **Going outside is more likely to have a positive (39%) than a negative (13%) impact.**
- Those **who do not monitor guidelines** find the daily news (55%), social media (40%), entertainment (28%) and books (25%) to be negative (55%).

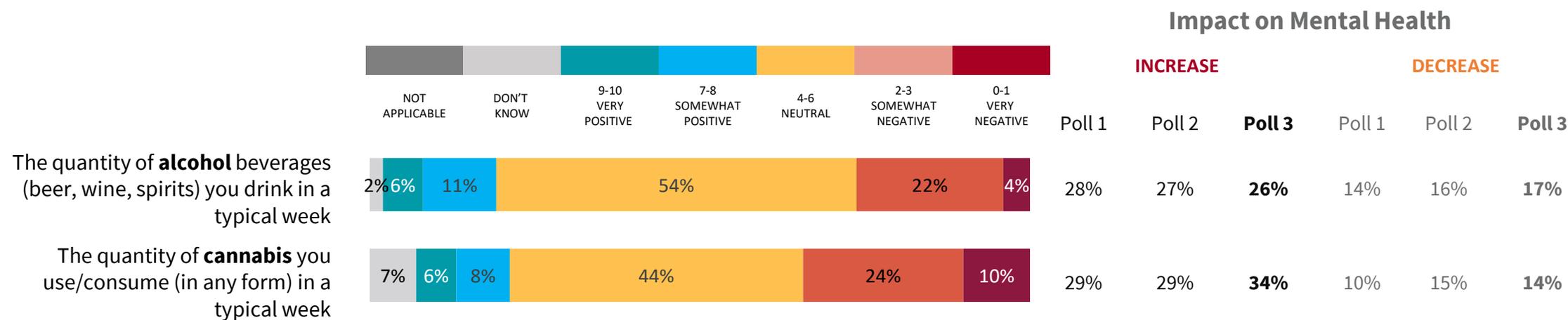
# The positive impact of activities on mental health has stabilized after a decline in Poll 2 (1/2)



A3A. During the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in Canada, please rate each of the following in terms of the impact they are currently having on your mental health, if any: Base: (Total N=2,004)

# While the increase in alcohol consumption has remained steady, more people are increasing their cannabis use

- One-quarter (26%) of Canadians who consume alcohol say their consumption has increased since the COVID-19 outbreak. This has remained steady since the Poll 1 test in April.
- While the proportion who has increased their cannabis consumption remained steady in Poll 1 and 2, it has gone up by 5% this Poll, with 34% of those who consume cannabis saying their consumption has increased.



• **A4.** Since the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in Canada, have the following increased, decreased or stayed the same in your life? Base: (**Total** those using the substance: alcohol n=1508, cannabis n=595)

# Increases in household conflict

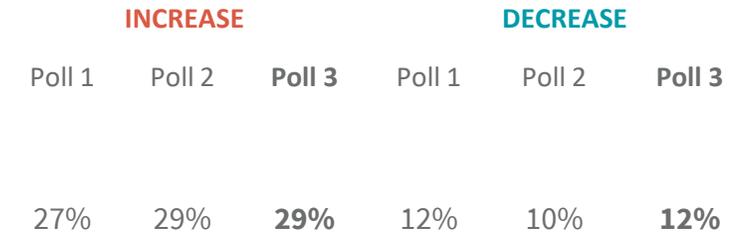
One-in-three Canadians who experience household conflict say this has increased since the outbreak of COVID-19. This is similar to the levels seen in Poll 1 and Poll 2 of this study.



The frequency of conflict between household members in a typical week



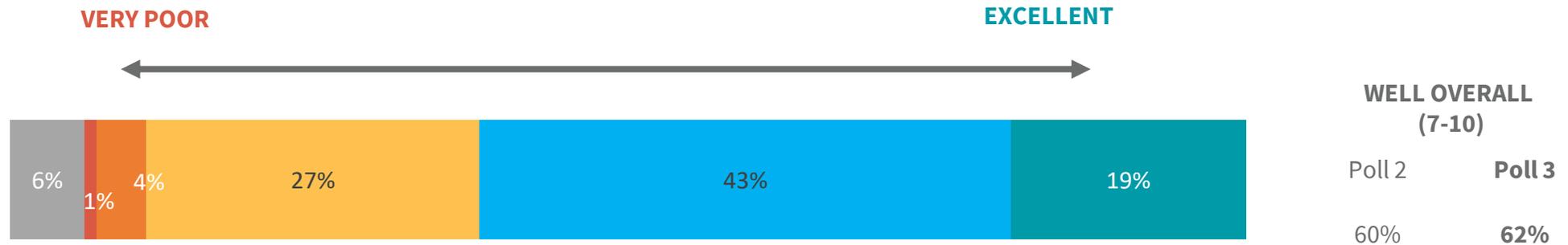
## Impact on Mental Health



A4. Since the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in Canada, have the following increased, decreased or stayed the same in your life? Base: (Those experiencing household conflict N=595)

# Canadians are feeling confident about their ability to recover from the challenges presented by COVID-19

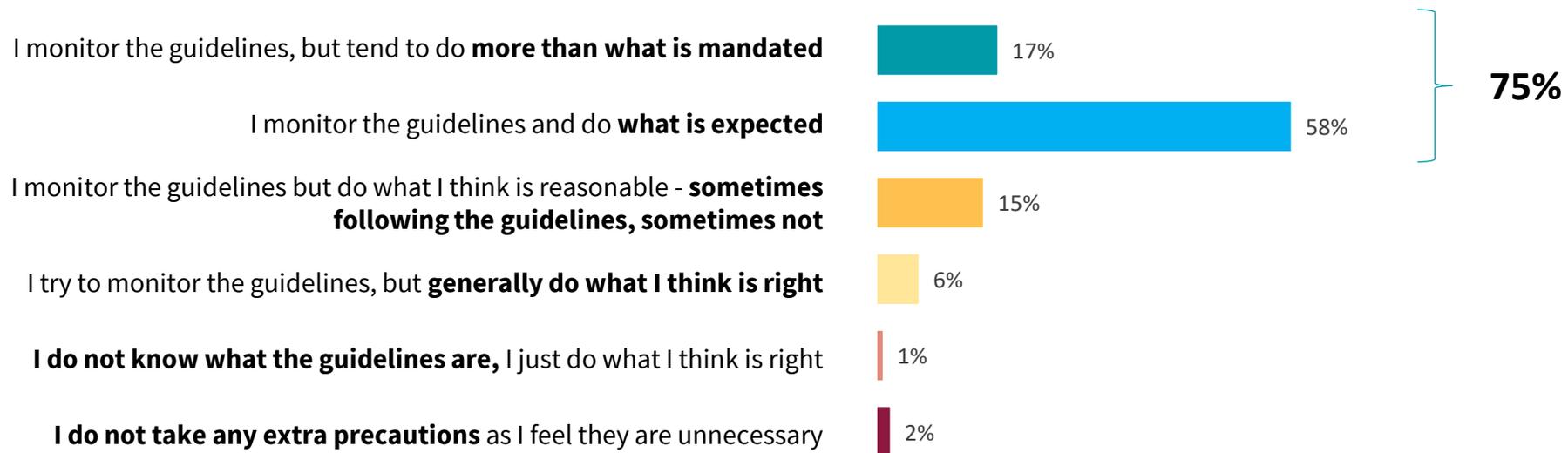
- While three-fifths of Canadians feel somewhat confident about their ability to bounce back from the challenges in life, (62% rate this 7 to 10, when 10 means excellent), less than one-fifth are feeling very confident (19% rating this a 9 or 10) and only 8% give their ability to do so a 10 out of 10. Results are similar to Poll 2 findings.
- Those who are not monitoring government guidelines are more likely to feel they are able to recover from challenges (rated 9-10: those do not monitor 33%, those who try to follow 19%, those who do follow 18%).



**A3B.** Thinking about challenges and unexpected troubles that you have faced in your life... Overall, how would you rate your ability to manage and bounce back from these challenges and unexpected troubles? Base: (Total N=2,004)

# Canadians are in compliance with the government's COVID-19 guidelines

- While the majority of Canadians from across the country report they are following the guidelines, compliance is lowest in BC (69%), where 11% try to monitor the guidelines, but generally do what they think is right.
- Compliance is also lowest among 18 to 34 years olds (68%), while being highest among those who are 55 and older (84%).



A5. Which of the following best describes how you are complying with government COVID-19 guidelines and laws (ex. social distancing, social bubbles/circles, masks, quarantines, etc.) in your area? Base: (Total N=2,004)



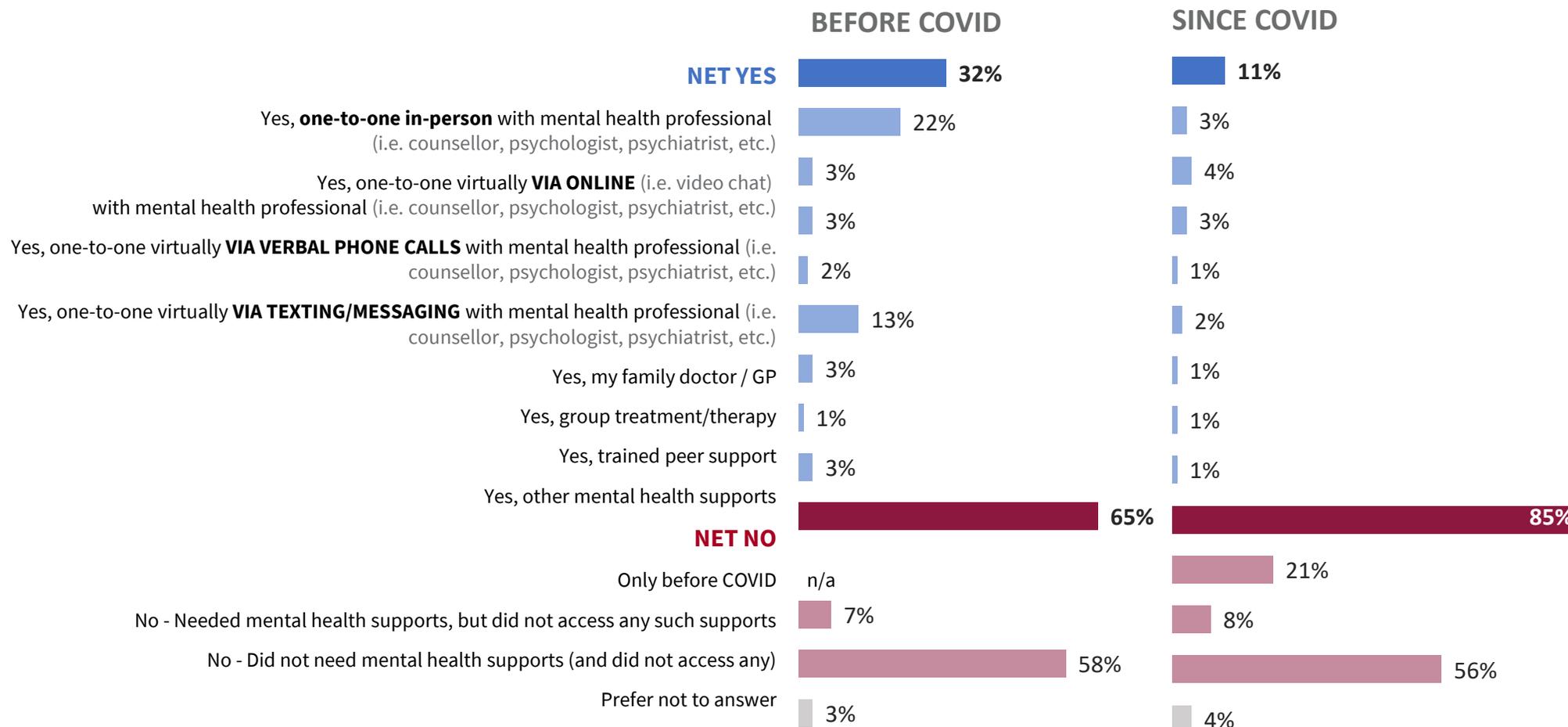
# Mental Health Supports

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# Since COVID-19 the number of Canadians accessing mental health supports has decreased significantly (1/2)



**B1.** Are you now, or have you ever received the support of a mental health professional? (Total N=2,004)

**B1.** POLL 2 BEFORE the outbreak of Coronavirus in Canada, have you ever had mental health support from any health care professionals? Total: (N=4,1010)

**B2.** SINCE the outbreak of the Coronavirus in Canada, which of the following types of support from mental health professionals have you received? Total: n=2004)



**Lesli Martin, Vice President, Pollara**  
**Michael Cooper, Director, MHRC**

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