



Psychological Health & Safety in Canadian Workplaces



Workplace Strategies
for Mental Health

Compliments of Canada Life



December 2021

Project Description



Thank you for reading this report on the state of psychological health and safety in Canada. This project is a joint effort between Canada Life, Workplace Strategies for Mental Health, Mental Health Research Canada and Pollara Strategies Inc.

Together, we have collected over 5,500 responses from employed Canadians across 13 key metrics influencing psychological health and safety in workplaces; the scores of each metric are calculated through five or six statements. Additionally, we partnered with over a dozen organizations and leading experts to explore additional questions. We thank those experts for their time and expertise.

These responses were collected from November 25 to December 8, 2021 using an online controlled and blind sample. In addition to the psychosocial factors, we collected over 20 demographic controls, allowing us to complete a myriad of analyses. Our challenge in analysis is scale, with so many variables and so many questions, the analysis that could be completed on this data is considerable. This report contains some of the more substantive findings.

In recognition that we have created a massive set of data, we are pleased to offer our data, responsibly used, to the broader research community for further analysis. If you have additional questions beyond our analysis, and you are interested in studying this further please reach out to bsaab@mhrc.ca.

Methodology

Methodology: On behalf of MHRC, Pollara Strategic Insights conducted an online survey among a randomly-selected, reliable sample of N=5,510 adult (18+) Canadians.

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.

Field Window: November 25th to December 8th, 2021.

Reliability: As a guideline, a probability sample of this size carries a margin of error of $\pm 1.3\%$, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error is larger for sub-segments.

Region	Number of Interviews	Margin of error
British Columbia	754	$\pm 3.6\%$
Alberta	634	$\pm 3.9\%$
Prairies	561	$\pm 4.1\%$
Ontario	2037	$\pm 2.2\%$
Quebec	1187	$\pm 2.8\%$
Atlantic Canada	337	$\pm 5.3\%$
National	5,510	$\pm 1.3\%$

Age	Number of Interviews	Margin of error
18-34	1724	$\pm 2.4\%$
35-54	2721	$\pm 1.9\%$
55+	1065	$\pm 3.0\%$
Total	5,510	$\pm 1.3\%$

Methodology

Industry	Number of Interviews	Margin of error
Health and Patient Care	493	±4.4%
First Responders	88	±10.5%
Education and Childcare	509	±4.3%
Finance, Legal and Insurance	356	±5.2%
Manufacturing	251	±6.2%
Transportation	155	±7.9%
Retail Trade	264	±6.0%
Total	2,116	±2.1%

	Number of Interviews	Margin of error
Visible Minority	1072	±3.0%
LGB2S/Non-Binary/Trans	397	±4.9%
Chronic Pain & Physical Impairment	438	±4.7%
Mental Impairment/Mood Disorder	625	±3.9%
Unionized Position	1789	±2.3%
Manager	1866	±2.3%
Not Manager	3644	±1.6%

Healthcare Workers	Number of Interviews	Margin of error
Nurses	106	±9.5%
PSW/LTC	81	±10.9%
Administration	92	±10.2%
Other Hospital	91	±10.3%
Mental Health*	37	±16.1%
Other Healthcare	85	±10.6%
Total	492	±4.4%

Ethnicity	Number of Interviews	Margin of error
Black	116	±9.1%
East Asian	384	±5%
South Asian	215	±6.7%
Other Visible Minority	378	±5%
No Visible Minority	4308	±1.5%

* While this sample is small, MHRC has similar findings in other reports consistent with this

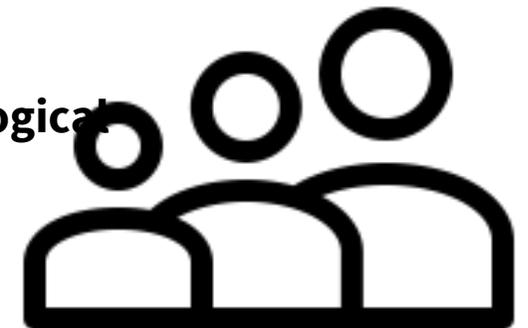
Key Findings – Age

Older Canadians feel more positively about their work environment overall. 18- to 34-year-olds are most likely to have issues when it comes to their confidence in doing their job and control over their environment. They have a higher rate of burnout and larger impact on psychological health and, while incidence is low, they are more likely to experience bullying and unfair treatment due to mental illness.

- **Younger Canadians (18–34-year-olds) are less engaged in their workplace, less likely to say they enjoy their work (51%) and are proud of what they do (57%), are less committed to the success of their team or organization (60%) and are less willing to give extra effort (60%).**
- **Older Canadians (55+) are better able to find a work-life balance (68%) and are more willing to talk to their employer to make this happen (53%). However, regardless of age, few say their employers offer programs or policies to prevent burnout (35%).**
- **35–54-year-olds are more likely to have issues with workplace conflicts and also have a higher rate of burnout and psychological impact than older Canadians.**

Key Findings – Age Continued

- **When it comes to Psychological Competencies, younger Canadians feel less confident in their ability to do their job (59%) while 35–54-year-olds feel less confident new hires will fit with the organization (45%) or that the company has prepared them to deal with the psychological demands of the job (37%).**
- **Older Canadians are more likely to feel their organizations offer recognition and reward (58%); 18–34-year-olds are least likely to feel they are fairly compensated (42%), and 35–54-year-olds are least likely to feel their accomplishments are celebrated (43%).**
- **Older Canadians feel more positively about all aspects of Workload Management. 18–34 year-olds feel they have the least control over their tasks and responsibilities (53%).**
- **The likelihood of burn-out decreases with age, being most prevalent in the 18–34 year-old age category and least in the 55+ age category. Working impacting psychological health is more prevalent among those under 55.**



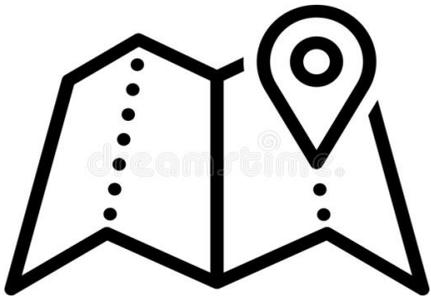
Key Findings – Age Continued

- **35- to 54-year-olds feel less strongly than either younger or older Canadians when it comes to people being accountable for their actions (46%), values being demonstrated at all levels (45%) and trust between employees and management (42%).**
- **Younger Canadians (18-35) feel their physical safety is not as protected as older Canadians do (55% vs. 67%). Those 55+ feel most strongly that employers respond when accidents happen or safety concerns are raised (63%).**
- **Older Canadians are also more likely to feel they receive clear leadership and expectations at work – they know what they are expected to do (82%), they are informed of changes (53%) and their organization has clear, effective communication (51%). Younger Canadians (18-35) are least likely to have clear expectations (63%), while 35–54-year-olds (42%) are less likely to say difficult situations are addressed.**
- **Opportunities for growth and development are more frequently experienced by younger Canadians (69%).**

Key Findings – Region

Employees from across the country feel similarly about psychological health and safety metrics. Overall, those in Atlantic Canada tend to feel the most positively about their workplace, although those in Quebec are least likely to feel the impacts of burnout, discrimination or bullying.

- Residents of Alberta have a harder time than other areas of the country when it comes to finding work-life balance (46%).
- There are numerous areas in which those in Atlantic Canada and Quebec are feeling most positive about their workplaces.
 - The primary high scoring metrics for Atlantic Canada are in terms of Engagement (79%), Psychological Protection (68%), and Psychological Social Support (67%). Statements regarding support around workplace stress as well as for those with physical impairments scored particularly high in this region.
 - Respondents in Quebec indicated high frequency in areas of Recognition and Reward (69%) as well as Civility and Respect (69%). More specifically, those in Quebec are more likely to say their workplace is inclusive (67%) and that people are held accountable for their actions (53%). Additionally, they feel least likely to experience discrimination or bullying and most likely to be treated fairly.



Key Findings – Industry

Employees working in Finances, Legal and Insurance feel most positively about psychological health and safety in the workplace. Those in Healthcare are most likely to say these attributes are rare in their workplace and are more likely to experience burnout, traumas, discrimination, harassment and to be treated unfairly due to mental health. The Transportation sector felt the least positive of all sectors across all psychological health and safety metrics. While managers generally feel more positively, they have a higher rate of burnout.

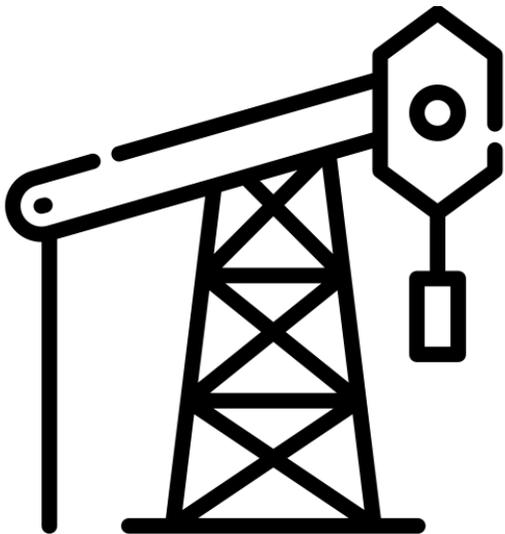
- Those working in Finance, Legal and Insurance feel most positively about many of the statements given, including those in the area of Balance (71%), Civility and Respect (74%), Clear Leadership and Expectations (74%), Growth and Development (73%), Involvement and Influence (75%), Organizational Culture (73%), Protection of Physical Safety (73%), Psychological Competencies and Demands (73%), Psychological Protection (73%), Psychological and Social Support (72%), Recognition and Reward (73%) and Workload Management (72%).
- First Responders and Healthcare workers scored poorly in key areas – notable areas in need of improvement are, for First Responders, *Growth and Development* (64%) and *Civility and Respect* (67%), and for Health and Patient Care, both *Balance* (59%) and *Psychological and Social Support* (60%).
- Management scored higher than non-management employees across all metrics.

Key Findings – Industry Continued

- **While Finance, Legal and Insurance feel more positively about their Workload Management (72%), First Responders, Manufacturer and Retail also feel they can talk to their supervisors about their workload (59%, 57%, 56%). Healthcare workers, particularly nurses, are more likely to feel these attributes rarely happen.**
- **We explored burnout as a separate issue to the 13 factors. Burnout was highest among healthcare workers with 53% indicating feeling this way. Inside that group, we noted Nurses expressed that comment 66% of the time.**
- **Scores for Recognition and Reward are highest among Finance, Legal and Insurance (73%), First Responders feel they are compensated fairly (59%) and Retail feel they are appreciated for extra effort (50%), though not adequately compensated for their work (39%).**
- **Those working in Health and Patient Care (particularly nurse and PSWs) and Transportation are least likely to feel their employers promote work/life balance or try to prevent burnout. Across all sectors non-managers are likely to say they can manage the demands of work and personal lives and that they are encouraged to take breaks, though they are less likely to feel supported, work-life balance is less frequently promoted (45%) and employers do not offer programs to help with burnout (33%).**
- **A minority of employees feel their employer has prepared them for the psychological demands of their job (39%). On key professions, like Health and Patient Care (31%), First Responders (34%) and Education (31%), it is substantially lower.**

Key Findings – Industry Continued

- A staggering 48% of first responders indicated that their were unavoidable psychological harms in their workplace. This indicates that when avoidance of harms is not possible, strategies to mitigate the effects are particularly important.
- Those working in Education are more likely than any other profession to say they enjoy their work (66%), and those working in Healthcare (57%) and Education (62%) say their work is an important part of who they are. While those who are not in management positions feel just as likely to give extra effort, they feel less Engagement on all other factors.



- Nearly 3 in 4 employees had new COVID-19 policies in place. But when we asked what those new policies were, only 4% mentioned new mental health policies at all.
- Policies to address COVID-19 related concerns are less likely to have been implemented in the Transportation industry, as well as in smaller organizations. Of those who have these policies, those in Transportation and Education and those in larger organizations are less likely to have had any input on it.
- Those in Healthcare are least likely to experience clear communication (33%), support from their superiors (46%) and effective response to difficult situations (31%). They also feel unprotected in cases of physical safety

Key Findings – Personal Circumstance

Visible minorities are more likely to feel discrimination in the workplace (15%) and feel they have less control over their environment in a number of ways. They are more likely to experience burnout (41%), bullying (50%), microaggressions (18%) and loneliness (19%).

Those in the LGBTQ2S+ community also feel discrimination (13%) and a lack of safety and protection in the workplace. They have high levels of burnout (43%) and are more likely to have experienced trauma (21%).

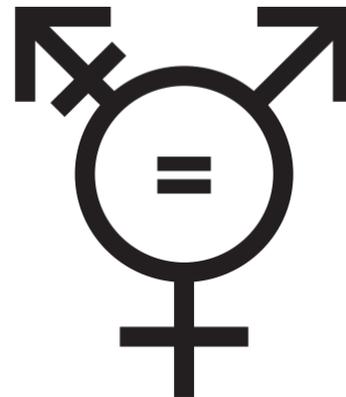
- **Those with mental impairments/mood disorders feel less socially and emotionally equipped to handle their jobs (61%) and to find work-life balance (46%); they are more likely to experience burnout (52%), to have experience trauma (29%) and to feel they are mistreated due to their mental health (10%).**
- **Visible minority employees are less likely to feel their Organizational Culture includes people of diverse backgrounds (57%).**

Key Findings – Personal Circumstance

- **When it comes to Psychological Competencies and Demands, visible minority (61%), members of the LGBTQ2S+ community (62%), and those with mental impairments/mood disorders (61%) are less likely to think they have the emotional and social skills to do their job. Visible minorities also feel less able to do their job in a way that meets their values (57%), while those with mental impairments/mood disorders are less likely to feel they have been prepared to deal with the psychological demands of the job (33%).**
- **Visible minority employees feel less engagement with their organizations (74%). Those in the LGBTQ2S+ community are less likely to feel committed to their team's success (60%) or that work is an important part of who they are (47%).**
- **In Recognitions and Rewards, visible minority employees feel less appreciated by their immediate supervisor but more celebrated by the organization (56%). Those with mental impairments/mood disorders (41%) or chronic pain (39%) feel less celebrated. While those with mental impairments/mood disorders are also less likely to feel fairly compensated (39%).**

Key Findings – Personal Circumstance

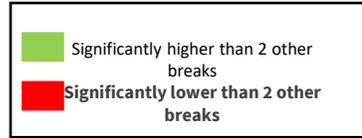
- While those with physical impairments are indicating experiences similar to the national average, those with chronic pain feel less supported, less celebrated (39%) , less likely to find work-life balance (44%) and more likely to burnout (46%).
- Visible minorities feel less Psychologically Protected when it comes to employer efforts to protect them from discrimination (52%), unsafe behaviours (51%) and bullying (50%). Members of the LGBTQ2S+ are also less likely to feel protected from unsafe behaviours (48%). Those with mental impairments and mood disorders are less likely to describe their workplace as psychologically safe (46%) and are less able to raise concerns about this safety (44%).
- Looking into specific visible minorities, we found that a higher percentage of Black Canadians are experiencing or seeing discrimination in the workplace.



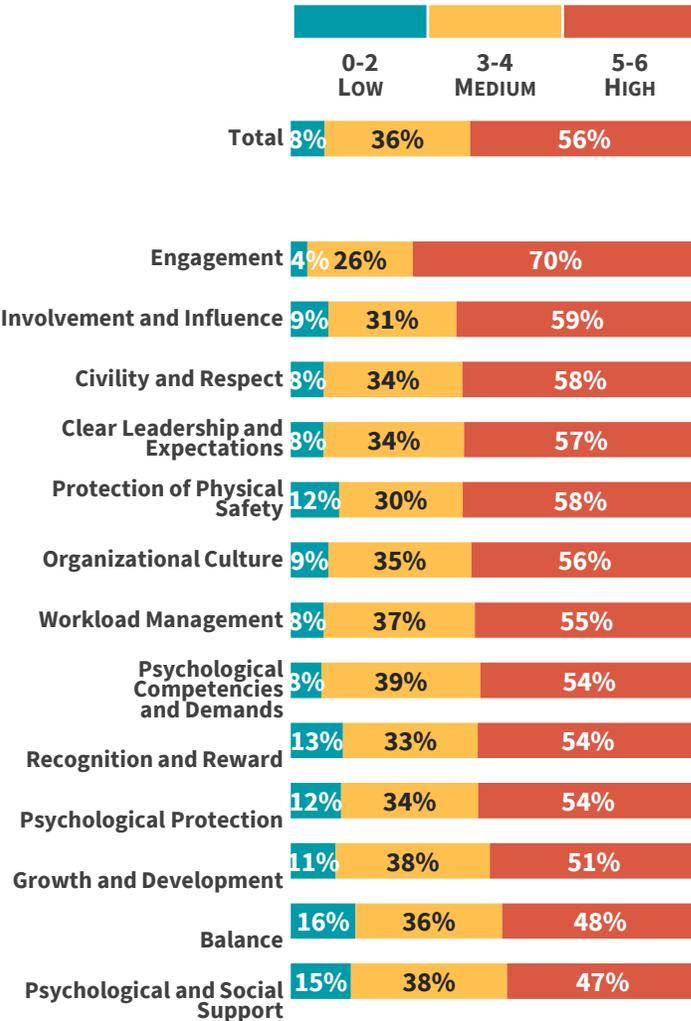
Key Findings – Personal Circumstance

- **Visible minorities (41%), members of the LGBTQ2S+ community (43%), those with mental impairments/mood disorders (52%) and chronic pain (46%) are more susceptible to burnout.**
- **Visible minorities are more likely to be experiencing discrimination (15%), harassment (11%) and to be treated unfairly due to mental health issues (6%). Those in the LGBTQ2S+ community and those with chronic pain are facing discrimination (13%), harassment (12%) and unfair treatment (7%) and are being impacted psychologically (32%) and have had to deal with trauma (21%).**
- **South Asian and Black Canadians were among the highest scores, even substantially higher than non-visible minorities. They scored significantly higher on nearly all categories, with the notable exception mentioned above for Black Canadians pertaining to discrimination.**

Summary of Ratings

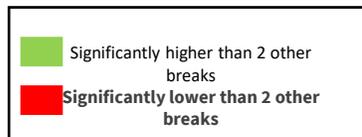


High Ratings by Sub-Category



	Age			Manager	Not Manager	Region						Industry						
	18-34	35-54	55+			BC	AB	PR	ON	QC	ATL	Health and Patient care	First Responders	Education and Childcare	Finance, Legal and Insurance	Manufacturing	Transportation	Retail Trade
	58%	56%	53%	65%	51%	55%	55%	57%	56%	56%	60%	49%	55%	59%	68%	59%	42%	57%
	64%	71%	77%	76%	67%	67%	70%	70%	69%	71%	76%	72%	70%	77%	71%	65%	52%	63%
	60%	59%	59%	68%	55%	58%	58%	59%	59%	60%	63%	53%	50%	60%	70%	60%	43%	58%
	60%	56%	58%	64%	55%	58%	58%	55%	59%	56%	60%	52%	46%	58%	66%	60%	48%	60%
	60%	56%	58%	63%	55%	57%	57%	58%	58%	56%	60%	49%	58%	58%	67%	61%	47%	60%
	55%	59%	58%	64%	54%	58%	60%	58%	58%	56%	59%	56%	53%	55%	66%	67%	49%	58%
	59%	53%	57%	62%	53%	56%	54%	54%	56%	57%	57%	50%	47%	58%	65%	55%	39%	59%
	54%	54%	58%	58%	53%	54%	54%	52%	56%	55%	56%	46%	59%	47%	62%	55%	44%	56%
	56%	52%	52%	61%	49%	51%	53%	54%	55%	53%	55%	48%	53%	53%	65%	53%	42%	54%
	56%	53%	52%	61%	51%	53%	52%	53%	53%	57%	56%	48%	59%	52%	67%	57%	45%	54%
	56%	53%	52%	61%	50%	55%	53%	54%	55%	51%	59%	44%	48%	52%	68%	60%	43%	54%
	55%	51%	45%	60%	46%	50%	50%	50%	52%	50%	56%	45%	44%	50%	67%	51%	38%	48%
	50%	49%	43%	54%	45%	48%	45%	48%	50%	47%	49%	41%	49%	48%	60%	48%	32%	45%
	48%	48%	43%	53%	44%	51%	44%	45%	50%	43%	53%	41%	49%	51%	65%	45%	38%	47%

Summary of Ratings



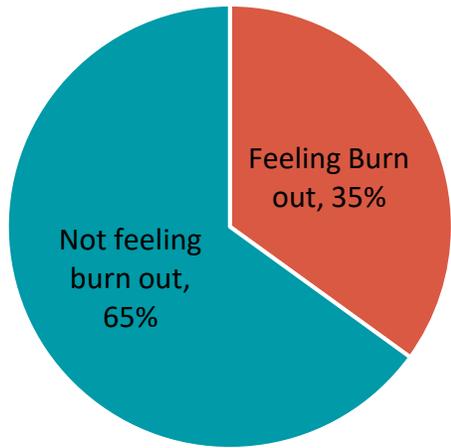
High Ratings by Sub-Category

	Total Often Happens (5-6)	Visible Minority*	LGB2S & Non-Binary/Trans/Queer*	Physical Impairment*	Mental Impairment & Mood Disorder*	Chronic Pain*	Ethnicity					Number of People in the Organization			Unionized Position*
							Black	East Asian	South Asian	Other Visible Minority	No Visible Minority	Less than 100	101-500	501+	
Total	56%	58%	52%	49%	48%	47%	63%	58%	63%	56%	56%	54%	59%	57%	52%
Engagement	70%	66%	65%	75%	69%	69%	71%	63%	71%	64%	71%	71%	71%	69%	67%
Involvement and Influence	59%	59%	59%	50%	57%	53%	59%	60%	64%	57%	60%	60%	60%	58%	53%
Civility and Respect	58%	58%	53%	52%	54%	49%	61%	55%	66%	56%	58%	58%	58%	58%	52%
Clear Leadership and Expectations	57%	59%	54%	55%	54%	52%	56%	58%	61%	60%	57%	58%	60%	56%	52%
Protection of Physical Safety	58%	58%	51%	47%	54%	53%	61%	57%	63%	56%	58%	54%	61%	61%	56%
Organizational Culture	56%	56%	52%	55%	54%	49%	53%	57%	62%	54%	56%	58%	56%	54%	49%
Workload Management	55%	56%	53%	47%	49%	50%	57%	56%	65%	53%	55%	57%	55%	53%	48%
Psychological Competencies and Demands	54%	54%	49%	45%	48%	46%	55%	55%	60%	53%	54%	54%	55%	52%	47%
Recognition and Reward	54%	56%	50%	48%	48%	47%	62%	57%	64%	51%	54%	54%	56%	54%	49%
Psychological Protection	54%	55%	51%	49%	49%	48%	52%	54%	60%	55%	54%	54%	57%	53%	48%
Growth and Development	51%	54%	52%	46%	50%	44%	54%	54%	57%	53%	51%	51%	51%	51%	46%
Balance	48%	51%	44%	43%	39%	40%	53%	50%	60%	49%	47%	47%	49%	49%	45%
Psychological and Social Support	47%	51%	41%	46%	40%	38%	56%	50%	59%	48%	46%	42%	49%	51%	46%

One-third of Canadians are feeling burned-out at work

- Burnout is highest among younger women, particularly in managerial or unionized positions and who work for larger organizations. It is particularly prevalent among visible minorities, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, those with a mental impairment/mood disorder or chronic pain. Burnout is lowest in Quebec, but similar in other regions of the country.
- Burnout is highest in the healthcare profession, particularly among nurses and mental health providers.

Experiencing Burnout at Work



	Age			Manager	Not Manager	Region						Industry						
	18-34	35-54	55+			BC	AB	PR	ON	QC	ATL	Health and Patient care	First Responders	Education and Childcare	Finance, Legal and Insurance	Manufacturing	Transportation	Retail Trade
Experiencing Burnout	41%	36%	24%	40%	33%	35%	38%	38%	36%	31%	35%	53%	36%	38%	39%	32%	40%	33%

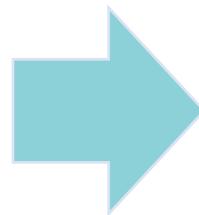
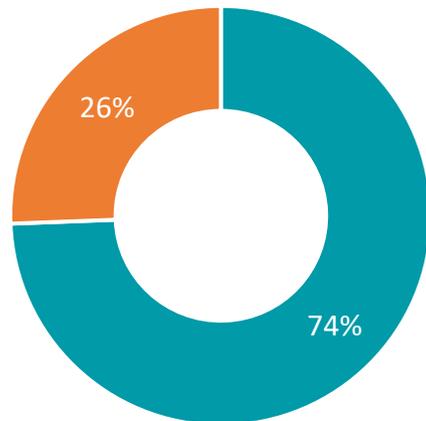
	Gender		Health Care Profession					
	Male	Female	Nurses	PSW/LTC	Admin	Other Hospital	Mental Health	Other
Experiencing Burnout	33%	39%	66%	49%	43%	51%	61%	50%

	Visible Minority*	LGBTQ2S+	Physical Impairment	Mental Impairment/Mood disorder	Chronic Pain*	Ethnicity					Number of People in the Organization			Unionized Position*
						Black	East Asian	South Asian	Other Visible Minority	No Visible Minority	Less than 100	101-500	501+	
Experiencing Burnout	41%	43%	35%	52%	46%	41%	41%	37%	43%	17%	31%	38%	40%	42%

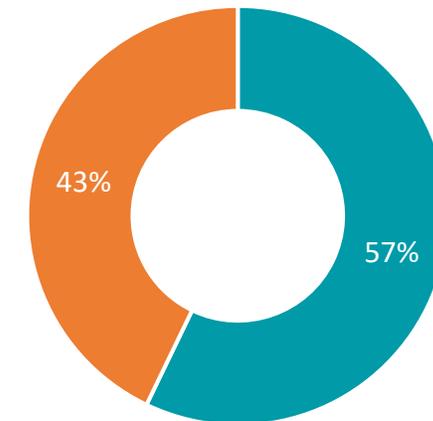
Most workplaces have COVID-19 related policies. More than half have had input to these policies.

- One-quarter of employees say their workplace has not implemented policies for COVID-19 related concerns. This is particularly true among those working in Transportation (35%), however, one-fifth to one-quarter of all other industries say the same. Those with physical impairments are more likely to say this has not happened (37%). In addition, smaller organizations are more likely to have not put these into place (less than 100 employees 33%, 101-500: 24%, 501+: 18%).
- Of those who have these policies, two-fifths did not feel they could provide input to them. This is most prevalent among younger employees (18-34: 45%, 35-54: 43%, 55+: 40%), those in the Education (50%) and Transportation (54%) fields, Black people (53%) and those in larger organizations (less than 100 employees: 34%, 101-500: 47%, 501+: 50%).
- Many COVID-19 policies focused only public health measures (with and without vaccine mandates), 51% of employees cited these as the only policies that were implemented in their workplace; only 4% of respondents indicated their workplace had policies involvement mental health support.

WHETHER IMPLEMENTED WORKPLACE POLICIES FOR COVID-RELATED CONCERNS



WHETHER FELT ENGAGED AND ABLE TO PROVIDE INPUT REGARDING NEW POLICIES



10. My workplace has implemented policies and supports to address any COVID-related concerns I might have. Base: (Total n=5,510)

11. Please elaborate on the policies and supports that have been implemented. (Those who said workplace policies were implemented n=4,130)

12. Have you felt engaged and able to provide feedback, suggestions, or comments regarding these new policies? Base: (Those who said workplace policies were implemented n=4,130)

■ Yes ■ No



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



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Compliments of Canada Life

