

WHICH CANADIANS ARE NOT ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS?

Background

MHRC is proud to partner with Health Canada to collect, analyze, and present data from our **national polling project** on the **mental health of Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic**. The information in this report is data gathered from **polls 6 to 12** of our Canada-wide survey, collected between **April 2021** and **April 2022**. The following data represents Canadians who selected the response "I needed mental health support but did not access it". The analysis in this report is on the 13 responses to the follow-up question **"Why did you not access the support of a mental health professional?"** (please select all that apply). **This report aims to identify the demographic conditions of those facing specific barriers to mental health care.** Addressing the commonly reported needs and barriers may be a starting point for ensuring equitable access to care for all Canadians.

2080 Canadians answered the above question about their behaviour before the pandemic, and **3224** Canadians answered about their behaviour since the pandemic. Due to small sample sizes, we are unable to make accurate conclusions with confidence about the Northwest Territories, Yukon or Nunavut.

Research Questions



1

Have the reasons why Canadians have not accessed the mental health support they needed changed since the pandemic began?

2

What are the demographic characteristics of the Canadians who are more likely to report a particular reason for not accessing mental health support?

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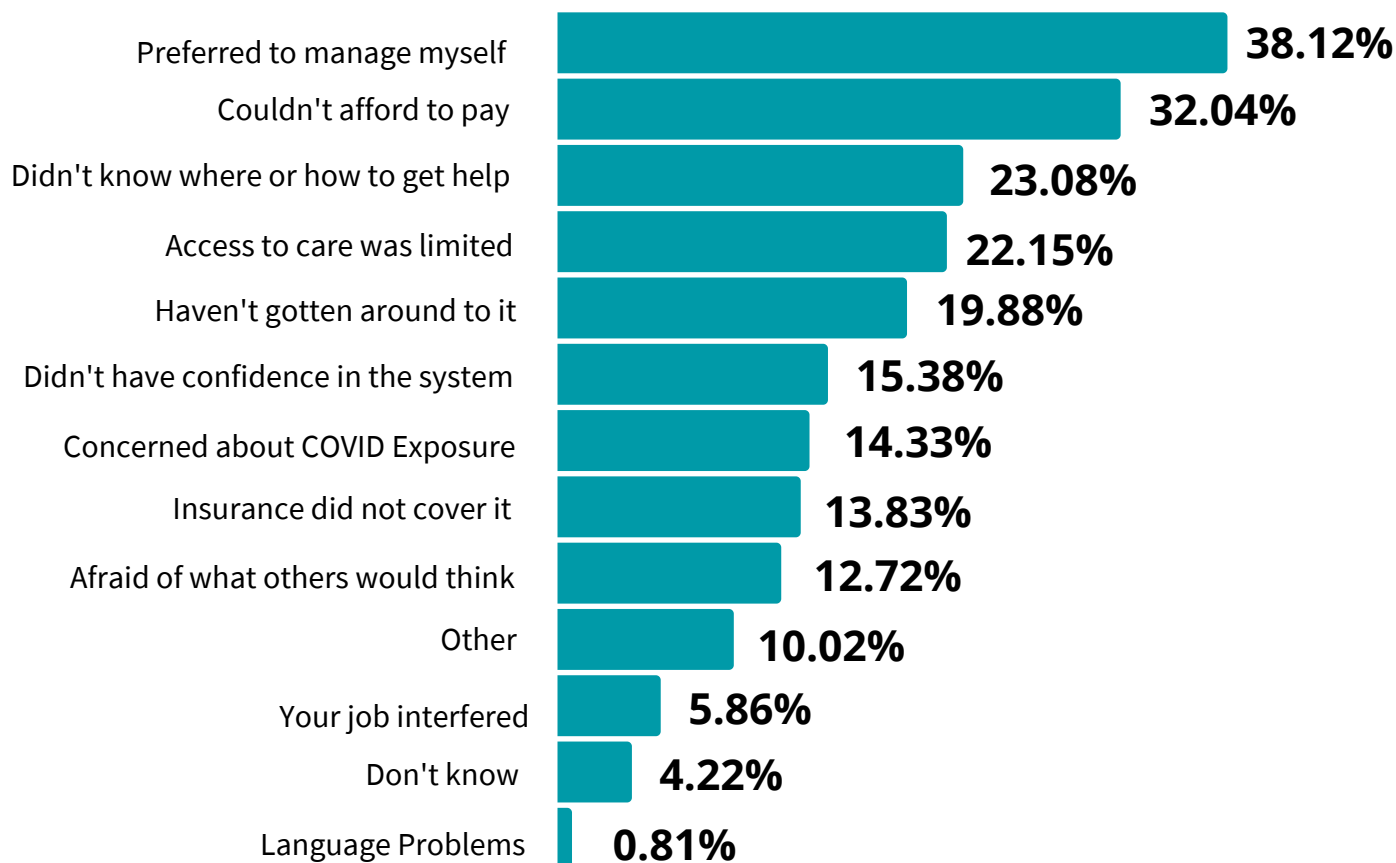
Not Accessing Mental Health Supports

Overall, **Canadians were most likely to not access the support of a mental health professional since the COVID-19 pandemic** because:

1. They preferred to manage themselves (38.1%).
2. They couldn't afford to pay (32.0%)
3. They didn't know where or how to get help (23.1%)

The **least likely reasons Canadians did not access mental health support since the COVID-19 pandemic** were:

1. Language barrier (0.8%)
2. Not knowing why (4.2%)
3. Job interference (5.9%)

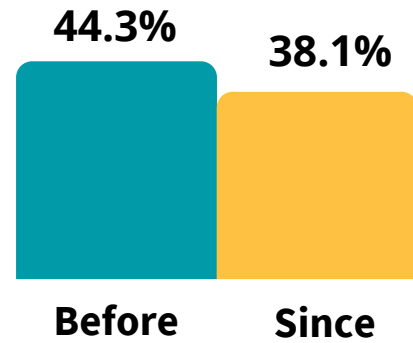


n = 3224 respondents were presented with the above question with a "Check all that apply" option, resulting in n= 6849 responses

WHICH CANADIANS ARE NOT ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS?

Before Vs Since COVID-19

Both before and since the COVID-19 pandemic, **Canadians who needed mental health support but did not access any** preferred to manage it themselves



Since the pandemic, fewer Canadians who needed support reported coping on their own

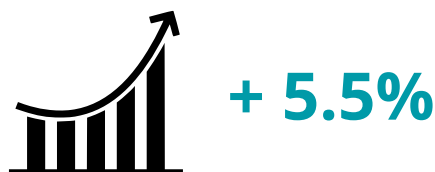
Since the pandemic, Canadians have reported a

7.9%

reduction in not seeking support because they were afraid of what others might think



Since the pandemic, Canadians were more likely to report that they did not access mental health support because access to care was limited



WHICH CANADIANS ARE NOT ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS?

Main Findings - Since COVID



Gender Identity

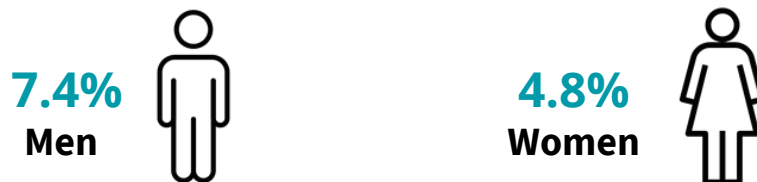
Respondents identifying as women were more likely to not access support because they:



Couldn't afford to pay

Didn't know where or how to get this kind of help

Respondents identifying as men were more likely to not access mental health support due to a job interfering:



*Sample sizes insufficient to make conclusions for respondents who indicated "other" or "unsure" as their gender identity

Self-identification

Respondents identifying as a **visible minority** were **more likely** to not access mental health support because they were **afraid of what others would think**



43.8%

Of individuals identifying as LGBTQ2S+ said they did not access mental health support because **they couldn't afford to pay** - this is **13% more than non-LGBTQ2S+**

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Main Findings - Since COVID

Mothers preferred to manage themselves less so than non-mothers (**5.7% difference**), and were **less likely than non-mothers to report not knowing where or how to access care (5.6% difference)**

Mothers were marginally (< 2%) more likely to not access support compared to non-mothers because:

Access was limited	+ 1.9%
Afraid of what others would think	+ 1.6%



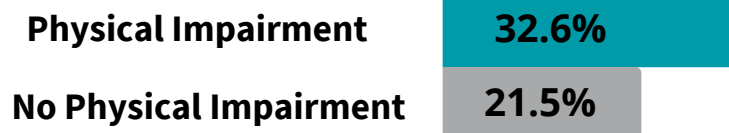
Students were most likely to say they **preferred to manage** their mental health **themselves (10.5% greater than non-students)**



Students were also much more likely to not access care because they **didn't know where or how** to get this kind of help (**14% greater than non-students**)

1/3 of individuals identifying as **having a physical impairment** reported not accessing support due to **limited access**

This is **11.1% more than respondents who did not** identify as having a physical impairment



Respondents with a physical impairment were more likely to report not accessing care because they couldn't afford support (**+6.2% difference** compared to those who did not have a physical impairment)

WHICH CANADIANS ARE NOT ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS?

Main Findings - Since COVID

Age Group

18-30 year old Canadians were most likely to report not accessing care because:

- 36.6% couldn't afford to pay for mental health care
- 15.8% didn't have insurance coverage for mental health care
- 16.6% are afraid of what others would think

Respondents **40-50 years** old were least likely to not access support when compared to other age groups because:

- 34.2% preferred to manage themselves
- 9.9% afraid of what others would think

19.1%

Respondents **50-60 years** old were much more likely than any other age group to report not accessing support because they **didn't have confidence in the system or services**



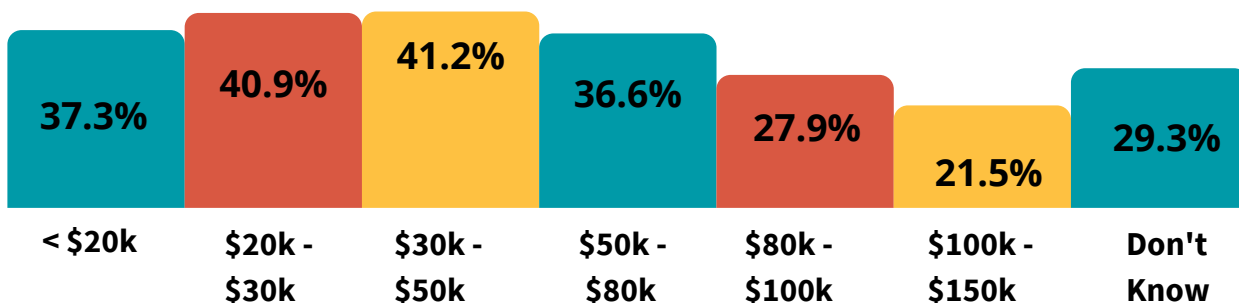
25.5%

Older Canadians (**60 years old+**) demonstrated the **lowest proportion** among all other age groups reporting a **barrier of affordability**

Income Bracket

The data doesn't reveal a direct relationship between household income and Canadians that report not accessing care because they can't afford to pay

Although respondents reporting higher household incomes were less likely to report they did not access support due to affordability barriers, **household incomes between \$30k and \$50k were more likely to not access support because they couldn't afford to pay for it, followed by lower income groups.**

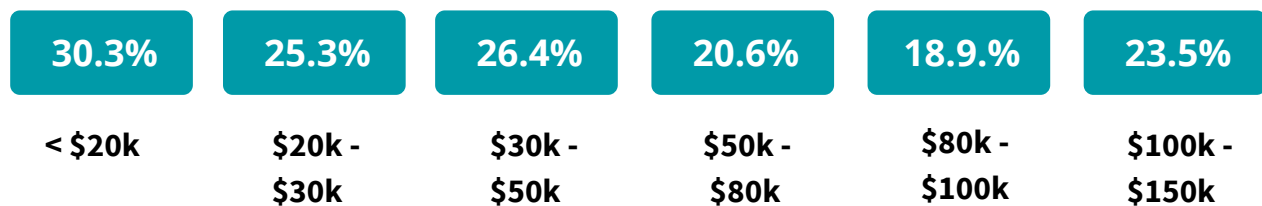


WHICH CANADIANS ARE NOT ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS?

Main Findings - Since COVID

It doesn't appear to be the case that income leads to increased access to mental health support

Although Canadians with **lower household incomes** were much **more likely** to say they didn't access support because **access to care was limited**, **household incomes between \$100-\$150K face similar barriers to households with annual incomes between \$20k-\$30k.**



Education Level

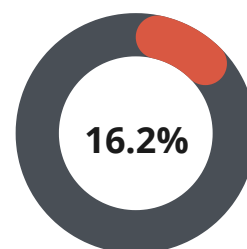
There is a **trend between level of education and making time to seek mental health support**

Of the respondents who haven't gotten around to it: ¹

- **22.4%** hold graduate / professional degrees
- **22.0%** hold undergraduate degrees
- **20.2%** graduated high school
- **18.6%** completed college



Respondents who reported **high school** as their highest level of education were **most likely** to not access care because they were **afraid of what others would think**



¹ Due to small sample sizes, we cannot draw conclusions about respondents who completed technical college, trade school or an apprenticeship for the survey response "I haven't gotten around to it"

WHICH CANADIANS ARE NOT ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS?

Main Findings - Since COVID

Province

When compared to the other provinces...

- 1 Residents of **BC** were **most likely** to report not accessing support because:
 - **25.7%** didn't know where to get help
 - **17.2%** worried about COVID-19 exposure
 - **14.8%** are afraid of what others might think
 - 2 Residents of **Alberta** were **most likely** to report not accessing support because:
 - **42.4%** preferred to manage themselves
 - **25.3%** haven't gotten around to it
 - **15.6%** insurance didn't cover it
 - 3 Residents of **Saskatchewan** were **most likely** to report they didn't access support due to a **lack of confidence in the health system or social services (21.8%)**
 - 4 Residents of **Manitoba** were **most likely** to report they did not access support because **they couldn't afford it (42.3%)**
 - 5 Residents of **Ontario** were **least likely** to report that they have not accessed care because **they didn't have confidence in the system or services (14.7%)** Affording to pay for support was a great barrier to support for this province (**30.2%**).
 - 6 Residents of **Quebec** were **most likely** to report they didn't access support because **access to care was limited (28.4%)**
- For **Atlantic Canadians**, **limited access to care was also a great barrier** when measured up to other provinces (**27.6%**)
- Compared to the rest of Canada, **Atlantic Canadians** were **least likely** to report they **preferred to manage themselves (33.5%)**, **couldn't afford it (29%)**, **didn't know where to get help (18.2%)**, **haven't gotten around to it (14.1%)**, **afraid of what others would think (9.6%)**, and **were concerned about catching COVID-19 (11.5%)**



*Sample sizes insufficient to make conclusions for residents of the Yukon, Nunavut and the NW Territories

WHICH CANADIANS ARE NOT ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS?

Some Canadians were more likely, or less likely than others to provide particular reasons for not accessing mental health support. Analyzing these reasons by several demographic variables can help **determine which Canadians are not accessing support since the pandemic**. Refer to the [supplementary appendix](#) found on our website [for a visual representation of the statistics given here](#).



Did Not Access Support Because I Preferred To Manage Myself

More Likely

47.4%	Students
42.4%	Between 18-30 years old
42.4%	Residents of Alberta
40.5%	Undergraduate Degree

Trend: Higher annual household incomes \$80k - \$150k+

Less Likely

33.5%	Residents of Atlantic Provinces
33.9%	Mothers
34.2%	Between 40-50 years old
34.8%	LGBTQ2S+
35.4%	College Graduates

Trend: Lower annual household incomes less than \$20k - less than \$50k

Did Not Access Support Because I Couldn't Afford to Pay

More Likely

43.8%	LGBTQ2S+
42.3%	Residents of Manitoba
41.2%	Annual Household Income \$30k - Under \$50k
38.4%	Technical / Trade / Apprenticeship
37.9%	Physical Impairment
36.6%	Between 18-30 years old
34.3%	Women

Less Likely

24.8%	Graduate / Professional Degree
25.5%	Over 60 years old
27.6%	Men
29.0%	Residents of Atlantic Provinces

Trend: Higher annual household incomes \$80k+

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Did Not Access Support Because I Didn't Know Where or How to Get This Kind of Help

More Likely

35.7%	Students
31.8%	LGBTQ2S+
26.9%	Visible Minority
25.7%	Residents of British Columbia
24.3%	High School Diploma
24.2%	Women

Trend: Younger Canadians

Less Likely

18.2%	Residents of Atlantic Provinces
20.6%	Men
20.5%	Mothers
20.9%	Graduate / Professional Degree

Trend: Older Canadians

Did Not Access Support Because Access to Care Was Limited

More Likely

32.6%	Physical Impairment
30.8%	LGBTQ2S+
30.3%	Annual Household Income under \$20k
28.4%	Residents of Quebec
27.6%	Residents of the Atlantic Provinces
25.6%	College Graduates

Less Likely

16.7%	Student
17.2%	Visible Minority
18.4%	High School Diploma
18.9%	Residents of Alberta and Saskatchewan
18.9%	Annual Household Income \$80k - under \$100k
19.0%	Residents of Ontario
21.2%	Between 18-30 years old

WHICH CANADIANS ARE NOT ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS?

Did Not Access Support Because I Haven't Gotten Around to It

More Likely

31.2%	Students
28.0%	LGBTQ2S+
26.8%	Canadians Who Don't Know Their Annual Household Income
25.3%	Residents of Alberta
25.0%	Visible Minority
22.4%	Graduate / Professional Degree

Trend: Younger Canadians

Less Likely

14.1%	Atlantic Provinces
14.4%	Residents of Atlantic Provinces
16.3%	Annual Household Income \$20k- under \$30k
18.6%	College Graduate
19.1%	Mothers

Trend: Older Canadians

Did Not Access Support Because I Didn't Have Confidence in the System or Social Services

More Likely

21.8%	Residents of Saskatchewan
19.1%	Between 50-60 years old
19.1%	Technical / Trade / Apprenticeship
17.5%	LGBTQ2S+

Trend: Lower annual household incomes under \$30k

Less Likely

13.5%	Between 30-40 years old
13.7%	Undergraduate Degree
13.9%	Between 18-30 years old
14.6%	College Graduate
14.7%	Residents of Ontario

Trend: Higher annual household incomes \$80k - \$150k+

WHICH CANADIANS ARE NOT ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS?

Did Not Access Support Because I Was Worried About Exposure to COVID-19

More Likely

19.5%	LGBTQ2S+
17.2%	Annual Household Income \$20k - under \$30k
17.2%	Residents of British Columbia
16.9%	Residents of Alberta
16.4%	Visible Minority
15.8%	Undergraduate Degree

Less Likely

11.5%	Residents of Atlantic Provinces
12.9%	Graduate / Professional Degree
13.0%	Annual Household Income \$50K - under \$80k
13.5%	Mother
14.5%	Residents of Ontario

Did Not Access Support Because Insurance Didn't Cover It

More Likely

17.1%	Annual Household Income \$30K - under \$50k
16.6%	College Graduate
15.8%	Between 18 - 30 years old
15.6%	Residents of Alberta
15.2%	Residents of Quebec

Less Likely

11.6%	High School Diploma
11.8%	Between 40-50 years old
13.1%	Annual Household Income \$80k+
13.6%	Residents of British Columbia

WHICH CANADIANS ARE NOT ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS?

Did Not Access Support Because I Was Afraid of What Others Would Think

More Likely

21.2%	Students
19.2%	Visible Minority
16.6%	Between 18-30 years old
16.2%	High School Diploma
16.0%	LGBTQ2S+
14.8%	Residents of British Columbia

Less Likely

9.6%	Residents of Atlantic Provinces
9.9%	Between 40-50 years old
11.9%	Annual Household Income \$50k - under \$80k
12.3%	Undergraduate degree

Did Not Access Support Because of Other Reasons

More Likely

12.8%	LGBTQ2S+
12.1%	Residents of British Columbia
10.6%	Men
10.0%	College Graduate

Trend: Older Canadians

Less Likely

8.9%	Undergraduate Degree
9.3%	Women
9.5%	Residents of Ontario

Trend: Younger Canadians

WHICH CANADIANS ARE NOT ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS?

Future Directions and Next Steps



Our research reveals that the reasons Canadians are not accessing mental health support vary widely according to different demographic variables. This report highlights the idea that each province, gender identity, income bracket, education level and self-identification group face their own unique barriers when it comes to accessing mental health support in Canada. **Addressing the commonly reported needs and barriers may be a starting point for ensuring equitable access to care for all Canadians.**

Next steps for this research include **continuing to collect** information on the **demographics** of Canadians responding to our national mental health surveys. MHRC will soon begin the next stage of this data collection by facilitating **qualitative interviews** with select groups to reveal more about the lived experience of mental health. Furthermore, we welcome partnerships with organizations interested in diving deeper into the gaps highlighted in this report.

Thank you to Pollara Strategic Insights for their continued partnership in our national polling project, evaluating the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of Canadians.

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Advisor: Michael Cooper – MHRC, Vice-President

For more information on MHRC'S national polling project "How COVID-19 is Impacting Mental Health in Canada" contact Brittany Saab at bsaab@mhrc.ca

Full reports of our findings can be found at www.mhrc.ca

