

Understanding the Mental Health of Canadians through COVID-19 and Beyond: Poll #16



Financial contribution from



Health Canada



Methodology



Methodology: This online survey was conducted among a sample of 3,494 adult Canadians. This was the sixteenth 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, and region to ensure the total sample is representative of the population as a whole. One province, Newfoundland, has been upsampled in this poll. As this study contained a booster of those who have accessed mental health supports in the past year, weighting has also been applied to make the total sample representative on this factor.

National	Interview Dates	Number of Interviews	Margin of Error
Poll One	April 22 to 28, 2020	1,803	±2.3%
Poll Two	August 21 to 31, 2020	4,010	±1.5%
Poll Three	October 22 to 28, 2020	2,004	±2.2%
Poll Four	December 10 to 18, 2020	2,761	±1.9%
Poll Five	February 1 to 8, 2021	3,005	±1.8%
Poll Six	April 20 to 28, 2021	4,005	±1.5%
Poll Seven	June 7 to 13, 2021	4,010	±1.5%
Poll Eight	August 17 to 24, 2021	3,010	±1.8%
Poll Nine	October 22 to Nov 3, 2021	4,108	±1.5%
Poll Ten	Dec 13 to 22, 2021	3,701	±1.6%
Poll Eleven	Feb 15 to 22, 2022	3,512	±1.7%
Poll Twelve	April 13 to 25, 2022	3,000	±1.8%
Poll Thirteen	July 13 to 22, 2022	3,023	±1.8%
Poll Fourteen	October 21 to Nov 1, 2022	3,500	±1.7%
Poll Fifteen	Jan 23 to Feb 6, 2023	3,238	±1.7%
Poll Sixteen	Apr 21 to May 3, 2023	3,494	±1.7%

Poll Sixteen	Number of Interviews	Margin of Error
British Columbia	370	±5.1%
Alberta	372	±5.1%
Prairies	252	±6.2%
Ontario	958	±3.2%
Quebec	653	±3.8%
Atlantic Canada	889	±3.3%

Major Findings



- Despite a decrease in high-rated levels of self rated anxiety and depression in autumn of 2022 (Poll 13), improvements have remained flat. Previous years have demonstrated the end of winter and arrival of warmer weather to positively impact mental health, this has not shown to be the case this collection which indicates that increased mental health challenges could be the new normal for Canadians.
 - Younger Canadians, those who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+, racialized groups, and those facing financial challenges are more likely to indicate high levels of anxiety and depression.
 - The percentage of Canadians likely to be experiencing symptoms of moderate to severe anxiety and depression have also remained consistent.
- Inflation continues to have a negative impact on the mental health of Canadians (51%). New insights show that one third (35%) of Canadians have decreased spending on essential items, one third (31%) have cut into their savings and one fifth (21%) have gone into debt as a result.
 - High levels of anxiety and depression are likely among those who have gone into debt as well as among those who have indicated experiencing food insecurity (35%).

Major Findings



- There is a strong correlation between Canadians experiencing burnout and possible dependency on alcohol and/or cannabis. Nearly half of those who are indicating signs of these dependencies (alcohol, 45%; cannabis, 42%) say they feel burnt out most of the time.
- Despite a lack of improvement in mental health challenges, most Canadians (82%) are feeling at least somewhat happy or interested in life. Older Canadians (aged 55 and up) are more likely to feel so than others.
 - Unsurprisingly, those experiencing extremely high levels (at least a 9 on a 10 point scale) of anxiety and depression are more likely to indicate that they are unhappy (47% anxiety, 34% depression). They are also more likely to experience suicide ideation; with 4% of men having made a plan to die by suicide in the past year.
- The majority of respondents (67%) feel confident that they know where to access mental health support;
 however, not knowing where to get help remains the primary barrier (32%) for the one-in-twenty
 Canadians who feel they need support but have not accessed it.
 - Additional barriers include wait times (13%), not being able to afford it (18%), and having not gotten around to it (24%).



Results in Detail



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Anxiety and Depression in Canada



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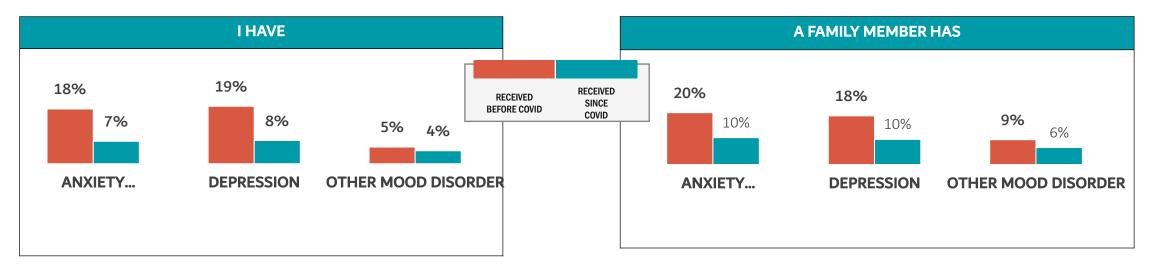
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Mental heath diagnoses have increased considerably since the onset of COVID-19



- Prior to the pandemic, almost one-fifth of Canadians report having experienced a personal or family diagnosis of anxiety (18% personal, 20% family) or depression (19% personal, 18% family). Other mood disorders were less common, with 5% having a personal diagnosis, and 9% a diagnosis in their family.
- Since the onset of COVID-19, 7% say they have personally been diagnosed with anxiety and 8% with depression. Additionally, 10% say a family member has been diagnosed with anxiety or depression (10% for both).
- When it comes to anxiety, Canadians between the ages of 18 and 34 years (14%) and racialized groups (11%) are more likely to have been diagnosed since the pandemic as compared to all other respondents. Those with financial concerns (21%) and/or showing signs of alcohol and cannabis dependency (30% and 25%) are also more likely that most to have received a diagnosis.
- A larger percentage of young adults (16-17, 12% and 18-34, 15%), racialized groups (13%), those with financial concerns (15%), or showing signs of alcohol or cannabis dependency (27% and 23%) reported receiving a diagnosis of depression since the start of the pandemic, compared to other segments of the population.



Base: (**Total** n=3,494)

High anxiety and depression levels are no longer improving



- One tenth of Canadians said they are experiencing high anxiety, which has remained consistent since the July 2022 and continues to be higher than before the onset of COVID-19 as reported by respondents in April 2020.
 - Younger Canadians between 18 to 34 years old (17%), students (15%), those who are unemployed (19%) or experiencing financial trouble (29%); 2SLGBTQIA+ identifying respondents (19%), and racialized groups (16%) tend to experience high levels of anxiety.
 - High anxiety is also more prevalent among Canadians struggling with mental health or showing signs of cannabis or alcohol dependency, affecting at least one third of individuals among those segments.
- A similar percentage (9%) of Canadians said they are experiencing high depression, which is also consistent since July 2022 and higher than before COVID.
 - Younger Canadians between 18 to 34 years old (15%), those who are unemployed (17%), have a low income (<30K, 13%) or financial troubles (25%), are a racialized person(14%), a member of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities (17%) or have a physical impairment (18%) are more likely to have high depression.
 - Similarly, high levels of depression are also more prevalent among Canadians reporting unhealthy level of cannabis or alcohol consumption, affecting at least one third of individuals in this group.



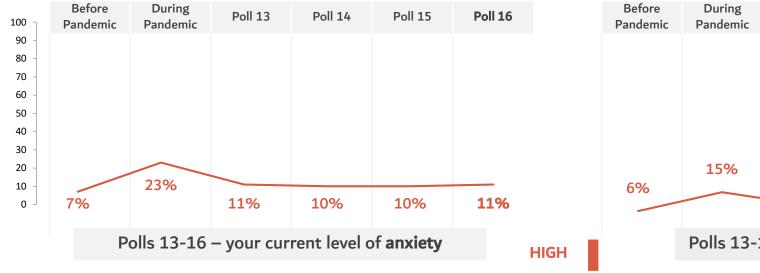
Poll 1: Before COVID-19

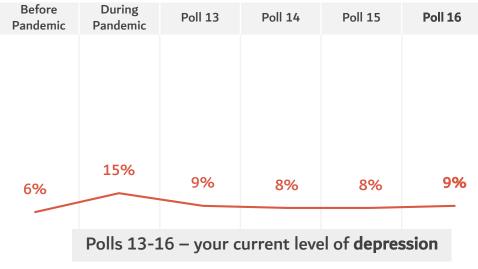
High Anxiety 5%

High Depression 4%

Levels of high anxiety and depression are not quite back to pre-pandemic numbers





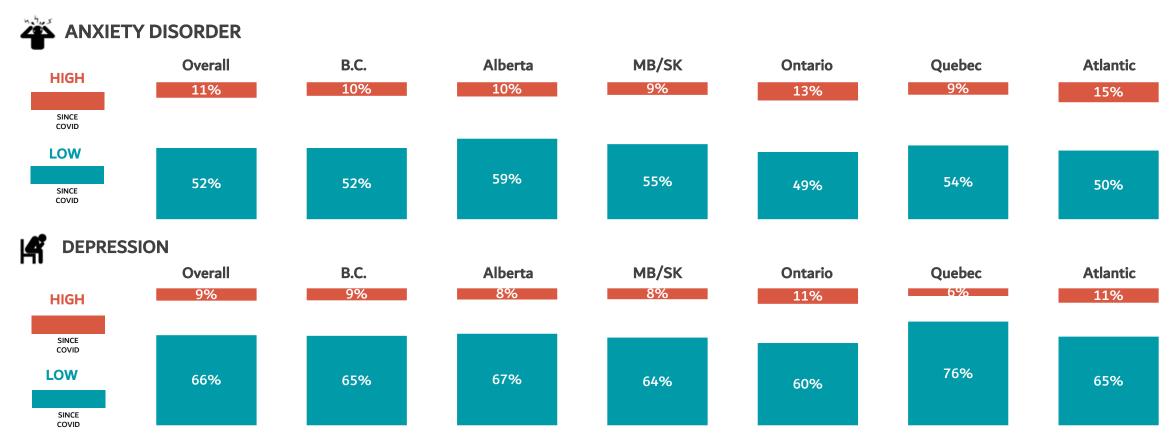


Polls 1-12 asked anxiety/depression levels since COVID.

Poll 13-15 asked current level of anxiety/depression.

The Atlantic provinces continue to experience the highest levels of anxiety





Polls 1-12 asked anxiety/depression levels since COVID.

Poll 13 asked current level of anxiety/depression.

Symptoms of moderate to severe mental health challenges have remained consistent



- Similar to the findings of the last three polls, three-quarters (77%) of Canadians who rated their anxiety or depression high (8-10) are likely to have symptoms of a moderate or severe mental health disorder. This poll saw a slight shift to more severe symptoms and fewer with moderate mental health disorders. Levels have not yet returned to the lows seen in April 2022 (60%).
- Among those who rate their anxiety or depression as moderate (5-7), almost two-in-five is likely to have symptoms of a moderate (21%) to have severe (21%) mental health condition, a decrease from 45% in Poll 15.

Mental Health Scores Among Canadians With High And Moderate Anxiety Or Depression Since COVID-19

Psychological Distress 1-5 Point Scale Items	(All/Most of the time)	(Never/ Infrequently)	Moderate:	rate: 5-7 High: 8-10															
Tired out for no good reason	35%	30%	POLL	LL POLL									ļ						
That everything was an effort	28%	41%	16	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	
Nervous Depressed		31% 22%	33%	12 %	11%	12%	12%	23%	19%	19%	20 %	21 %	20 %	23 %	19%	19%	18%	21%	Likely to have no mental health disorder symptoms(<20)
Restless or fidgety Worthless Hopeless	18%	48% 61% 57%	23%	11 %	14%	13%	13%	16%	17%	19%	19 %	20 %	19 %	18 %	18%	18%	19%	16%	Likely to have a mild mental disorder symptoms (20-24)
So sad that nothing could cheer you up So nervous that nothing could calm you down	13%	62% 66%	21%	22 %	24%	17%	21%	18%	19%	18%	22 %	22 %	21 %	21 %	20%	22%	26%	21%	Likely to have moderate mental disorder symptoms (25-29)
So restless you could not sit still	12%	68%	22%	55 %	52%	58%	54%	42%	45%	44%	38 %	38 %	40 %	37 %	43%	40%	36%	42%	Likely to have severe mental disorder symptoms(30-50)

One seventh of Canadians are likely to have moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety

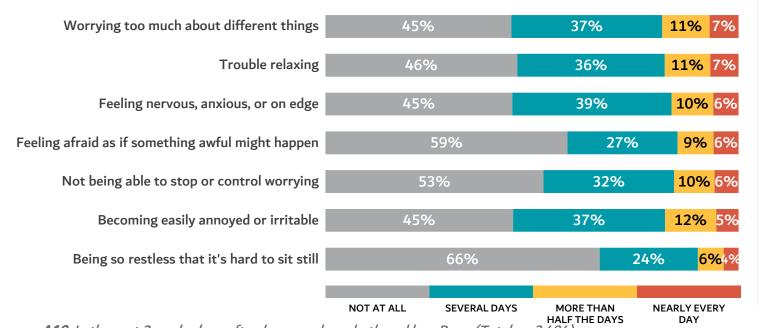


- The General Anxiety Disorder -7 (GAD-7) screening test shows that 5% of Canadians have severe anxiety and 10% have moderate anxiety symptoms. Scores have remained consistent since this test was started in Poll 6.
- Younger Canadians (18-34) are more likely to be experiencing severe (9%) or moderate (18%) symptoms of anxiety.
- While the frequency of severe anxiety symptoms among frontline health-care workers is similar to the national average, the frequency of moderate anxiety symptoms are higher among this sector(23%).

• Those with lower incomes or who are experiencing financial trouble or are dependent on alcohol or cannabis are more likely to experience moderate to severe anxiety.

This is also true among those in 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

Psychological Distress Anxiety Frequency Scale Items



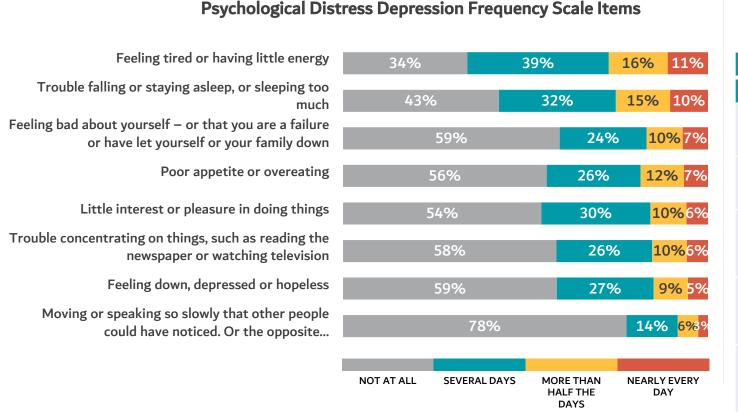
Mental Health Scores Among Canadians With Anxiety Since COVID-19

					POLL						
16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	
62%	63%	64%	66%	65%	64%	62%	65%	63%	63%	62%	Likely to have no anxiety disorder symptoms (0-5)
23%	23%	23%	20%	23%	22%	23%	22%	23%	22%	23%	Likely to have a mild anxiety disorder symptoms (6-10)
10%	9%	9%	9%	8%	10%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	Likely to have moderate anxiety disorder symptoms (11-15)
5%	5%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%	5%	5%	6%	Likely to have severe anxiety disorder symptoms (16-21)

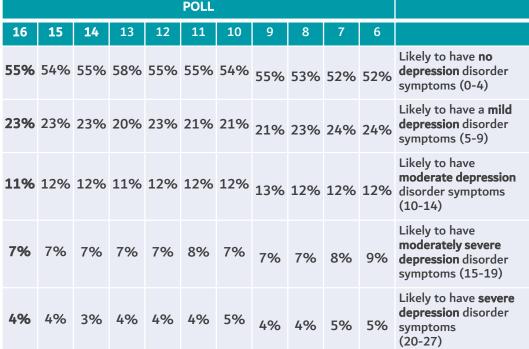
The percentage of Canadians experiencing symptoms of moderately severe to severe depression has not changed



- The Patient Health Questionnaire -9 (PHQ-9) test demonstrates that 23% of Canadians are likely to have symptoms of a moderate to severe depressive disorder, with 4% having severe, 7% moderately severe, and 11% moderate symptoms. Results have remained consistent since the start of this test (Poll 6).
- Symptoms of moderate to severe depression are highest among 18- to 34-year-olds (38%), those who are unemployed (41%) or in financial trouble (57%) or who have alcohol or cannabis dependency.



Mental Health Scores Among Canadians With Depression Since COVID-19



One-in-seven Canadians are struggling to cope with mental health challenges



- The number of Canadians saying they are not coping well (15%) has remained consistent since the summer of 2022 (Poll 13), this percentage is much lower than that seen at the height of the pandemic.
- Young adults under 34 years (21%) and students (22%) are more likely to say they are not handling stress well.
- Other groups that have a high percentage of those saying they are not handling stress well are those with symptoms of a severe (30%) mental health disorder and those with financial troubles (27%).







Impacts on Mental Health



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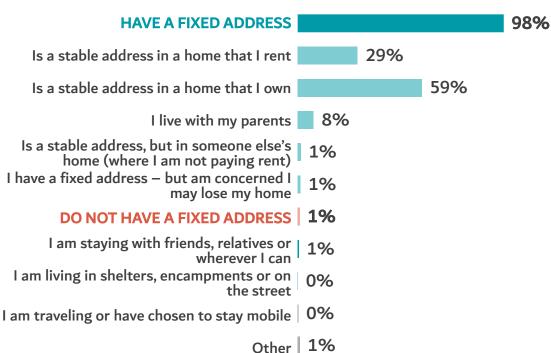


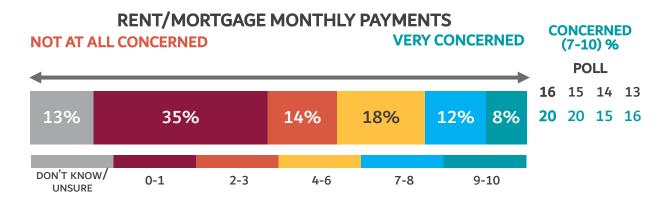
Housing concerns have not changed since Poll 15



Rising prices and inflation are continuing to take their toll. In January, those concerned about paying for their housing
had increased by 5% to reach 20%. While this sentiment had not gotten worse in this poll, it has also not improved,
with 20% feeling concerned about their ability to pay for housing.

CURRENT HOUSING SITUATION

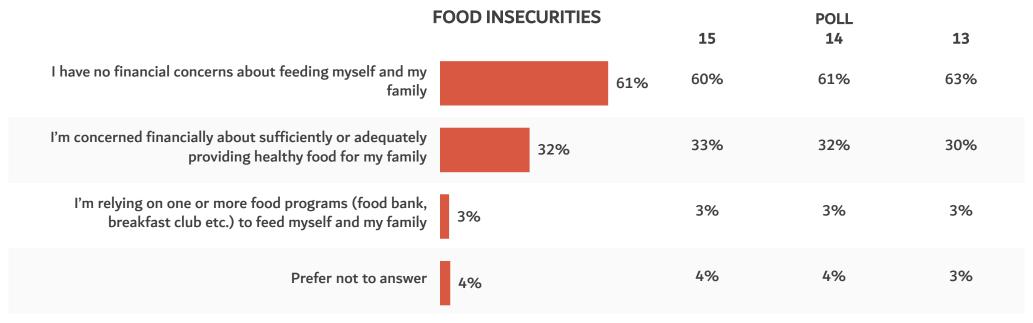




A third of Canadians continue to worry they can't afford healthy food for their family



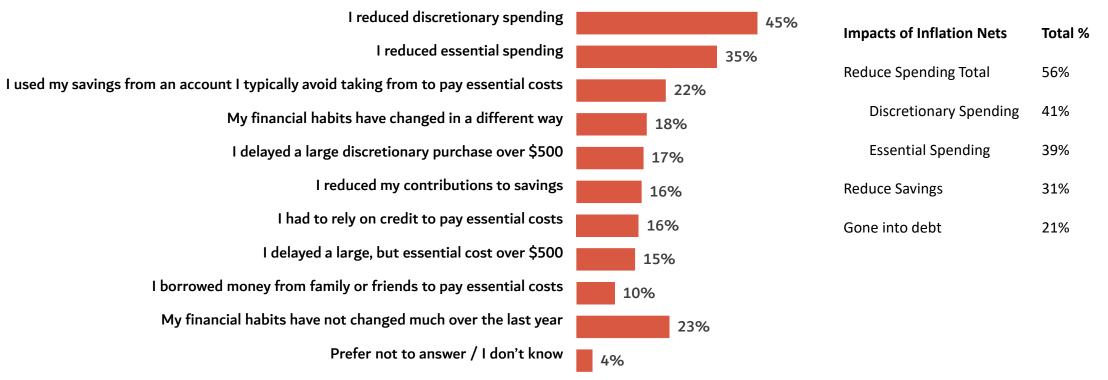
- There has been no relief for those with food insecurities this poll, with 32% continuing to worry that they cannot afford sufficient and healthy foods and 3% being dependent on food programs. This is similar to the Poll 14 and 15 findings.
- Almost two-fifths (39%) of British Columbia residents have food insecurities, with this poll finding that 5% in this province are currently relying on food programs.
- Profile of those with healthy food insecurity: younger Canadians(18-34 48%, 35-54 43%), those who have children under 9 (52%), unemployed (58%), racialized groups (47%), those with a physical impairment (63% a 6% increase from Poll 15 and a 12% increase from Poll 14) and members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities (47%)
- Those experiencing high levels of anxiety or depression are significantly more likely to be experience food insecurities (anxiety/depression rated 8-10 62% and 63% respectively).



One-fifth of Canadians have gone into debt due to inflation



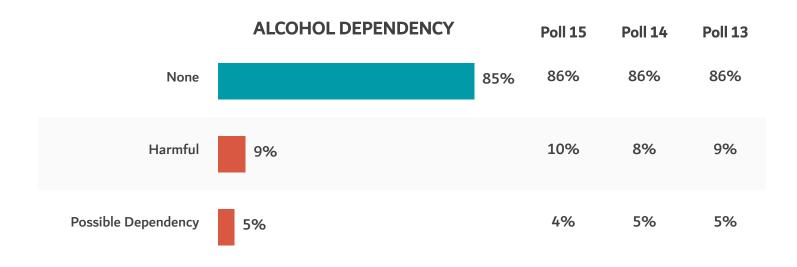
- Three-quarters of Canadians (73%) say that inflation has impacted their financial life in the past year. More than half (56%) have reduced their spending due to inflation. While 41% have reduced their discretionary spending, 39% have had to cut back on their essentials. One-third (31%) have reduced their savings, either by dipping into their savings or by reducing their savings contributions. One-fifth (21%) have increased their debt, either by relying on credit cards or borrowing money.
- Those who rate their anxiety and depression high are more likely to have gone into debt (rated their anxiety or depression 9-10 52% and 51% respectively).
- Most likely to have taken on debt: Younger Canadians(18-34, 31%:35-54, 28%), people with children under 9 (38%), frontline health care workers (48%), racialized groups(32%) and those with a physical impairment (35%).



One-in-seven Canadians exhibit signs of harmful or dependent alcohol consumption



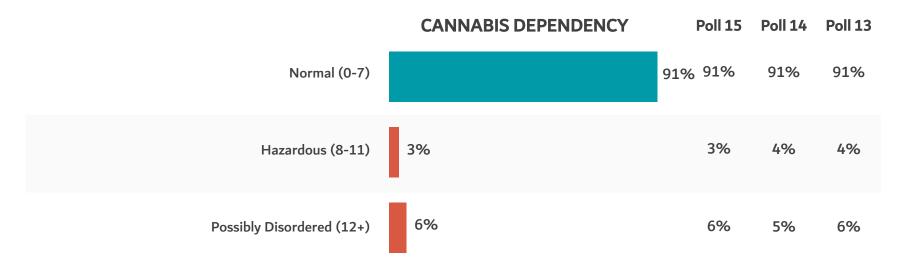
- Through the AUDIT screener, 5% of Canadians show signs of being dependent on alcohol, while 9% are exhibiting harmful behaviours. This remains unchanged over the past three polls.
- **Profile of those demonstrating signs of a possible alcohol dependency:** Younger Canadians (18-34, 7%; 35-54, 7%), those with children under 9 (8%), having financial troubles (23%) or those likely to have symptoms of a mental health disorder (severe 17%).
- Likelihood of alcohol dependency among frontline health-care workers is higher than average at 14%.



One-in-ten Canadians show signs of cannabis consumption that is hazardous or disordered



- The CUDIT-R screener demonstrates that cannabis dependency is currently less prominent than alcohol dependency, with 3% exhibiting hazardous behaviours and 6% a disorder. Results have remained consistent over the past four polls.
- Profile of those demonstrating signs of a cannabis use disorder: 18-34-year-old (13%,), men (8%), those living alone (9%) or with children under 9 (11%), frontline health care workers (17%), those experiencing financial troubles (22%) and racialized groups (10%).
- Those likely to have symptoms of a severe mental health disorder (27%), experiencing high anxiety (16%) or depression (21%) and also more likely that most to exhibit signs of cannabis dependency.
- Almost half of those dependent on alcohol are also likely to have a cannabis dependency disorder (38%).

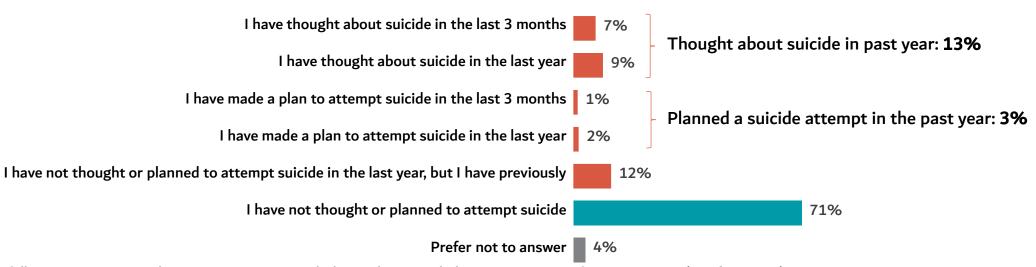


More than one-in-ten Canadians have thought about suicide in the past year



- Thoughts of suicide continue to be more predominant among younger people. However, the frequency of 16–17-year-olds thinking about suicide in the past year has increased by 8% to 31%, while 21% of 18-34-year-olds have had these thoughts, 4% and 5% respectively have planned a suicide attempt in the past year.
- Thoughts of suicide are the same among men and women (13% for men and 13% for women), however men are more likely to have made a plan in the past year (4% vs. 2% of women). In 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, 33% have thought about suicide and 6% have made a plan in the past year, similar to the findings of Poll 15.
- Financial instability is associated with suicide ideation, with those experiencing money problems being more likely to have considered it. Specifically, those who are unemployed (28%), have an income below 30k (22%),have financial troubles (27%) or have gone into debt due to inflation (28%) were more likely to have had suicidal thoughts in the past year.
- Those who rate their anxiety and depression as very high (rated 9-10) have more thoughts of suicide. Half (48%) of those with high depression have thought of it in the past year and one-in-eight (13%) have planned an attempt in the past year. Of those rating their anxiety as high, 38% have thought about suicide in the past year and 12% have planned an attempt in the past year.

THOUGHTS RELATING TO SUICIDE



Economic conditions continue to have a negative impact on mental health



13

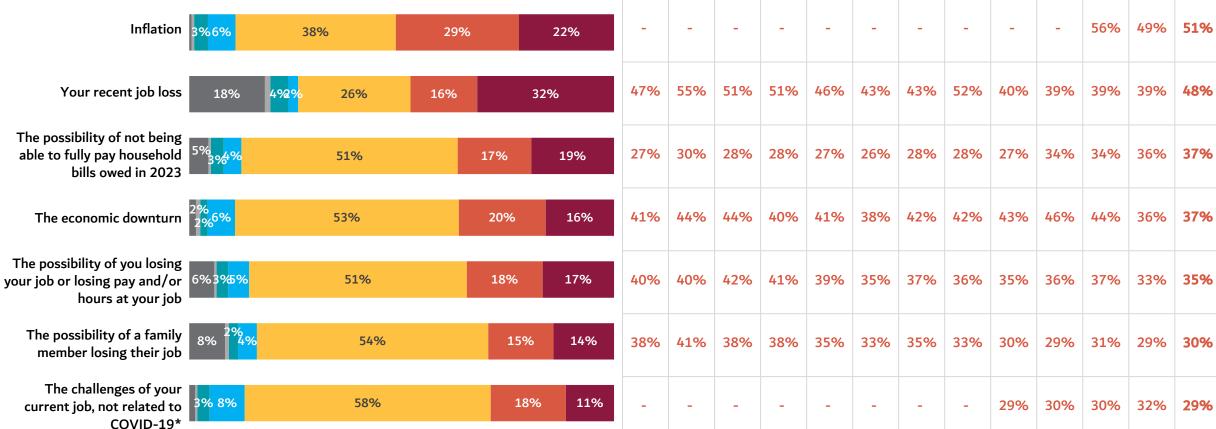
14

15

16

Impact on Mental Health

NEGATIVE IMPACT DON'T KNOW 9-10 7-8 4-6 2-3 0-1 **POLL APPLICABLE VERY SOMEWHAT NEUTRAL SOMEWHAT** VERY 8 10 11 12 **NEGATIVE POSITIVE** POSITIVE NEGATIVE

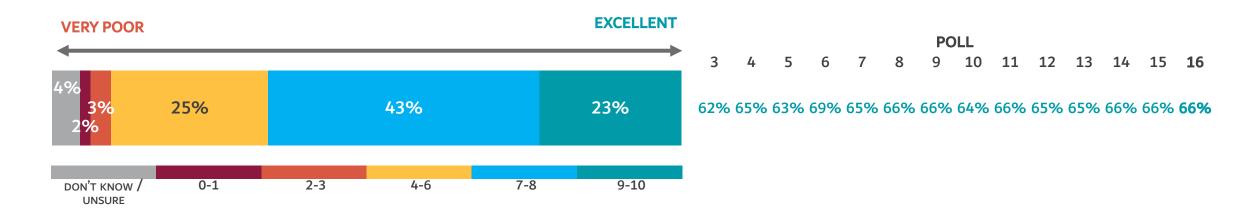


A3A. During the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in Canada, please rate each of the following in terms of the impact they are currently having on your mental health, if any: Data <2% not labelled. Base: (**Total** n = 2,065 - 3,494), * "Your recent Job loss" base: 134 (Those who are unemployed)

Confidence in the ability to recover from challenges has remained consistent



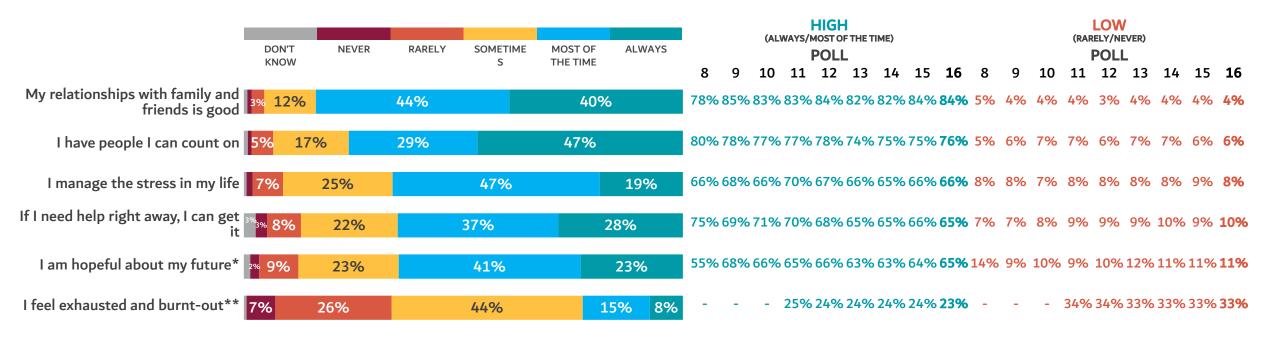
- Two-thirds of Canadians continue to feel somewhat confident about their ability to bounce back from the challenges created by COVID-19 (66% rate this 7 to 10, when 10 means excellent). This has remained consistent since Poll 7.
- Younger Canadians below 55 years are not as positive (7-10 rating) about their ability to bounce back from the challenges presented by COVID-19 as older Canadians (16-17: 55%, 18-34:53%; 35-54: 61%; 55+: 79%).
- While members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities continue to have a hard time bouncing back from the challenges and unexpected troubles, this has seen a slight improvement since last poll (52%, a 4% increase).
- People who have not been diagnosed with a mental health disorder are considerably more positive (7-10) about bouncing back from the challenges they faced due to the pandemic (76%) compared to those who are experiencing mental illness (58%).



Most Canadians remain hopeful and feel that they have people they can count on



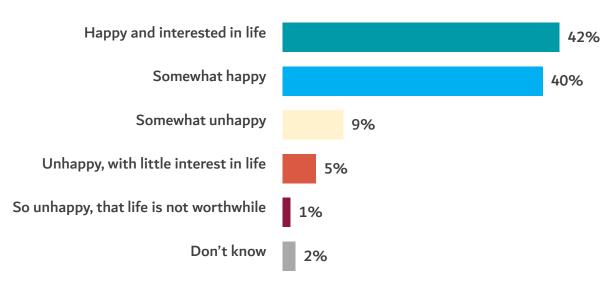
- While still high, hopefulness saw a slight decline in Poll 13 and levels have remained consistent t since. Similarly, levels of having people to count on and the ability to get help if needed have remained consistent this poll, after a drop in Poll 13.
- A quarter of people remain exhausted and burnt-out, a level that has not changed since this question was added in Poll 11. Burnout is less prevalent among those retired (7%). It is more of an issue for students (38%), those looking for work (45%) as well as those working (25%). Additionally, those with a mental health diagnosis are more likely to be burnt out compared to those without this diagnosis (34% vs. 12%).
- People in Quebec (75%) and those over 55 (72%) continue to feel most hopeful. Members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities (49%), racialized groups (58%) and those with physical impairments (52%) are less likely to feel hopeful.



The vast majority of Canadians are at least somewhat happy



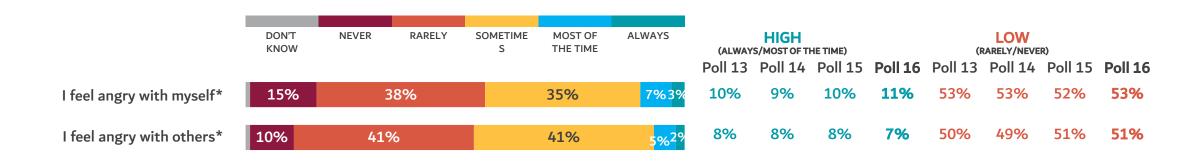
- Canadians are generally happy (82%), with two-fifths saying they are happy and interested in life (42%) or somewhat happy (40%), similar to last poll's findings.
- Those over the age of 54 (53%) and retired (56%) are more likely to be happy and interested in life than younger age groups, while those who are students (35%) or unemployed (29%) are less likely to be happy.
- Not surprisingly, anxiety and particularly depression impact happiness. Almost half (47%) of those who rate their depression as very high (9-10) say they are unhappy, with one-fifth (18%) saying that life is not worthwhile. One-third of those rating their anxiety as high (9-10) say they are unhappy (34%), with one-in-ten (10%) saying that life is not worthwhile.
- Racialized groups (33%) or members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities (21%) are less likely to say they are happy and interested in life.
- Less than one-fifth of those exhibiting signs of alcohol or cannabis dependencies are happy and interested in life (and 20% and 22% respectively).



One-in-ten Canadians remain angry with themselves or others most of the time



- One-in-ten of the Canadians reported being angry with themselves most of the time (7%) or always (3%) with 7% being angry with others most of the time (5%) to always (2%).
- Anxiety and depression exacerbate this anger, slightly more so this poll than in Poll 15. Those who say their anxiety or depression is high are more likely to say they have felt angry with particularly themselves but also others most of the time to always (anxiety rating of 9-10 angry with self 49%, others 42%, depression rating of 9-10 angry with self 56%, others 35%). Additionally, those with a diagnosis are more likely to feel angry most of the time than those without (angry at self anxiety 19%, depression 18%, angry at others anxiety 11%, depression 11%).
- Anger with self has also increased among some demographic groups. Younger Canadians (16-17, 21%; 18-34, 21%; 35-54, 11%; 55+, 3%), students and unemployed (19% and 23% respectively), those with a household income of less than 30k (19%), members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities (24%), and racialized groups(16%) are more prone to be angry with themselves at least most of the time.
- Those living in urban centers are more likely to be angry with themselves (11% vs. 7% in rural areas).





Mental Health Supports



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One-in-ten Canadians accessed mental health support in the last year



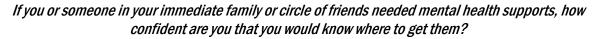
- One-in-ten (12%) reported accessing mental health services in the last year while 4% felt they needed it but didn't. Seven-in-ten (69%) reported they have never accessed any mental health services.
- Younger (18-34: 18%; 35-54: 13% vs. 55+: 8%), women (14%), those who are unemployed (22%) or students (15%), those working in education (20%), members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities (30%), those with high anxiety (26%) and depression (25%); those with financial troubles (34%); and those who exhibit signs of dependency on cannabis (20%) or alcohol (24%) are more likely to have accessed the mental health services in the past year.
- More information about how people are accessing mental health support, including the type, frequency, duration and satisfaction with care, will be available in an additional report.

	Poll 15	Poll 14	Poll 13
Yes, I have accessed services in the past year 12%	12%	10%	11%
I have felt the need to access mental health services in the past year, but have not actually done so	4%	5%	5%
I have accessed services more than a year ago 12%	12%	9%	9%
I have never accessed services 699	% 69%	73%	72%
Prefer not to answer 2%	3%	3%	2%

Confidence in knowing where to get mental health supports has increased this poll



- Two-thirds of Canadians (67%) are somewhat (47%) or very (20%) confident they would know where to get mental health support for themselves or loved ones. This is an increase of 12% since last poll, when 43% were somewhat and 12% were very confident.
- Those who have accessed mental health supports in the past year are more likely to feel very confident (31%).
- Those with a diagnosis are more likely to feel confident (70%), however ratings of high anxiety or depression do not impact this confidence.
- Last poll, those in BC were least confident in knowing where to get mental health support, this confidence has increased considerably (68%, an increase of 17%). Quebec holds the highest confidence this poll (73%).







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