



GreenShield Cares:

Women's Mental Health Report



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Background

In collaboration with GreenShield, Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC) produced this report focusing on the mental health of women and equity-deserving Canadians. This information was collected from **July 2022 - August 2023**, for **polls 13 - 17** of MHRC's Canada-wide survey. This data represents **6,708 women and 5,676 men** who answered questions about their mental health in an online survey.

Case for Exploration

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, women experienced higher rates of unemployment, anxiety, and depression compared to men. This study aims to explore how these trends have continued to evolve through the pandemic recovery.

This report explores the intersectionality of women's mental health with a focus on key indicators: anxiety and depression, access to care, unmet need, satisfaction of care, barriers to care, and impact of economy, to begin to understand the barriers women experience when seeking mental health support.

The intent of this report is to share insights and inform the development of mental health services for women – particularly for women from equity-deserving groups – and advance better health for all.

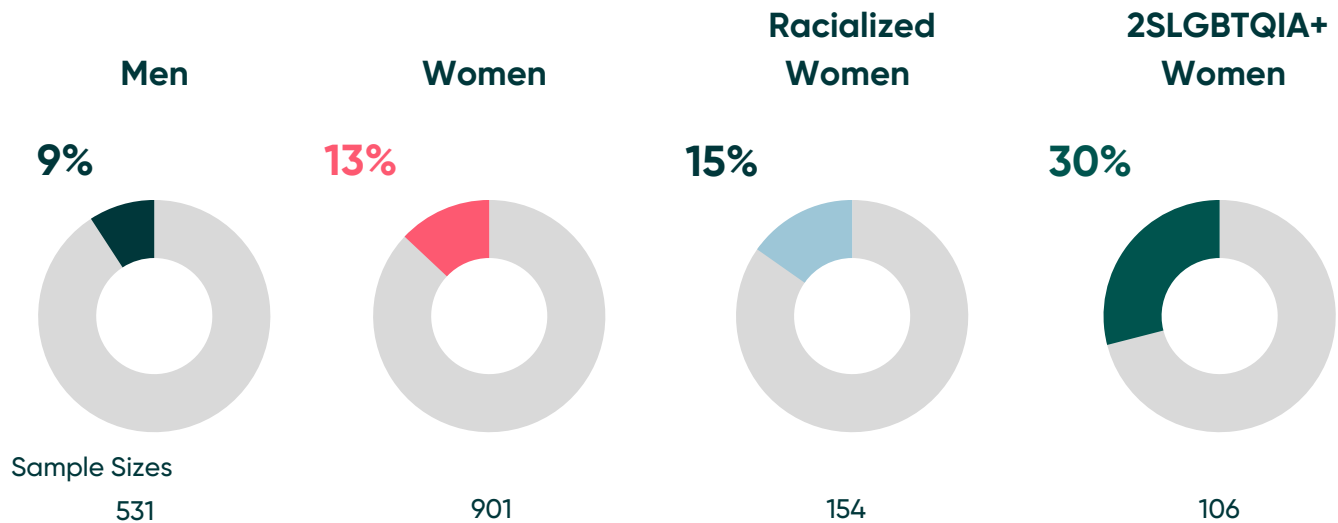
Executive Summary

This report aims to assess indicators of women's mental health, focusing on equity-deserving groups. Though mental health indicators have remained relatively stable through the spring of 2022, MHRC data consistently finds that some Canadians are more likely to report anxiety and depression, and are facing unique barriers to care. MHRC's national polling series has demonstrated gender differences across many mental health indicators. Overall, **women are more likely to report higher levels of anxiety and depression, compared to men. New findings reveal that more considerable gaps exist for women who identify as part of an equity-deserving group.**

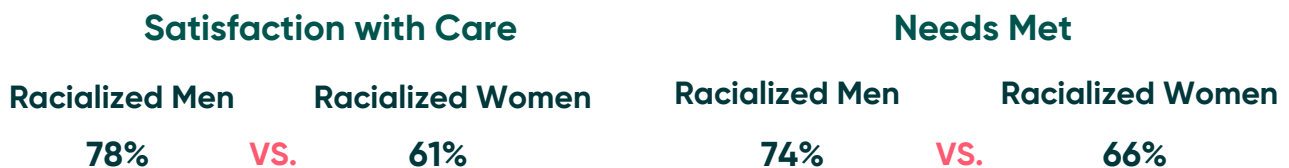
This report highlights that equity-deserving Canadians, despite being more likely to access care, are less likely to get the support they need.

Key Findings

Women, particularly those who self-identify as racialized persons or 2SLGBTQIA+, are more likely to report symptoms of anxiety or depression, compared to men (See Page 3, Figures 1 and 2) These are also the **Canadians more likely to report accessing mental health support in the last year:**



7 in 10 Canadians feel satisfied with the care they received, and that their needs were met. However, recent findings reveal that **racialized women are less likely to report they are satisfied with care, compared to racialized men:**



Women (71%) are slightly more likely than men (67%) to report that the current economic conditions are impacting their mental health.

Of the 5% of Canadians who reported needing mental health support but not accessing any, women are twice as likely as men to say it was because of financial barriers to care.



Women are more likely to report symptoms of anxiety or depression. This is especially true for some equity-deserving groups.

Though levels of anxiety and depression remain higher than before the pandemic for all Canadians, consistent patterns in the data indicate that compared to men, women are more likely to report more severe symptoms of anxiety and depression on clinical screeners:

Symptoms of Anxiety

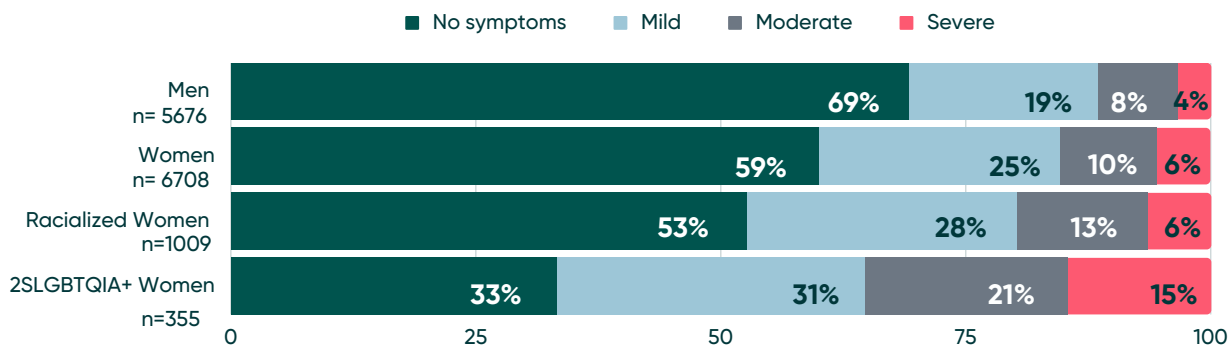


Figure 1. Symptoms of anxiety measured on the GAD-7. Polls 13 to 17 (July 2022 to August 2023).

Further gaps in mental health indicators exist between women and equity-deserving communities. Figure 1, above, demonstrates that 19% of racialized women and 36% of 2SLGBTQIA+ women reported moderate to severe anxiety symptoms on the Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) clinical screener, compared to 16% of women or 12% of men.

Symptoms of Depression

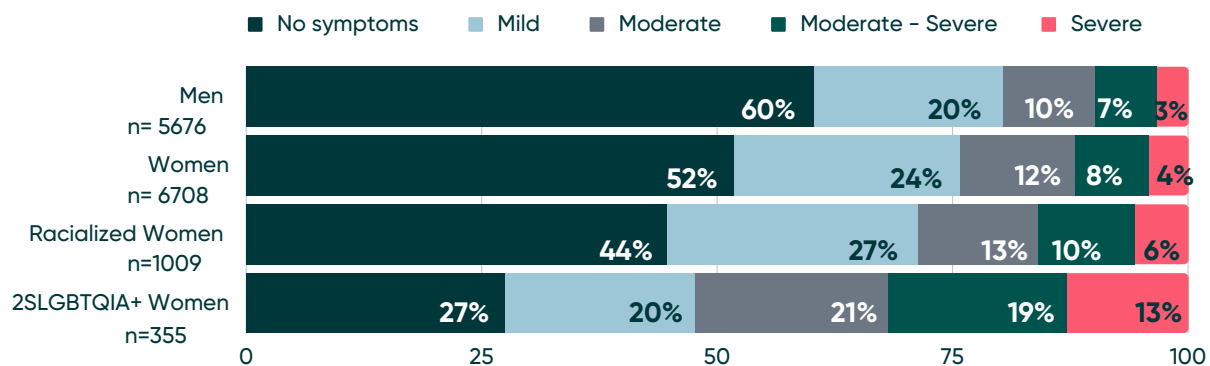


Figure 2. Symptoms of depression measured on the PHQ-9. Polls 13 to 17 (July 2022 to August 2023).

Similar patterns are observed for depression. 16% of racialized women and 32% of 2SLGBTQIA+ women reported moderately severe to severe depression symptoms on the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) clinical screener, compared to 12% of women or 10% of men (See Figure 2).

Women, particularly those from equity-deserving groups, are more likely to report having accessed mental health care.

1 in 10 Canadians reported accessing mental health or substance use supports in the last year (12%). This number has remained relatively stable through the recovery period of the pandemic. Women, particularly racialized women, are more likely than the general public to report accessing care in the last year.

Access to Care in the Last Year

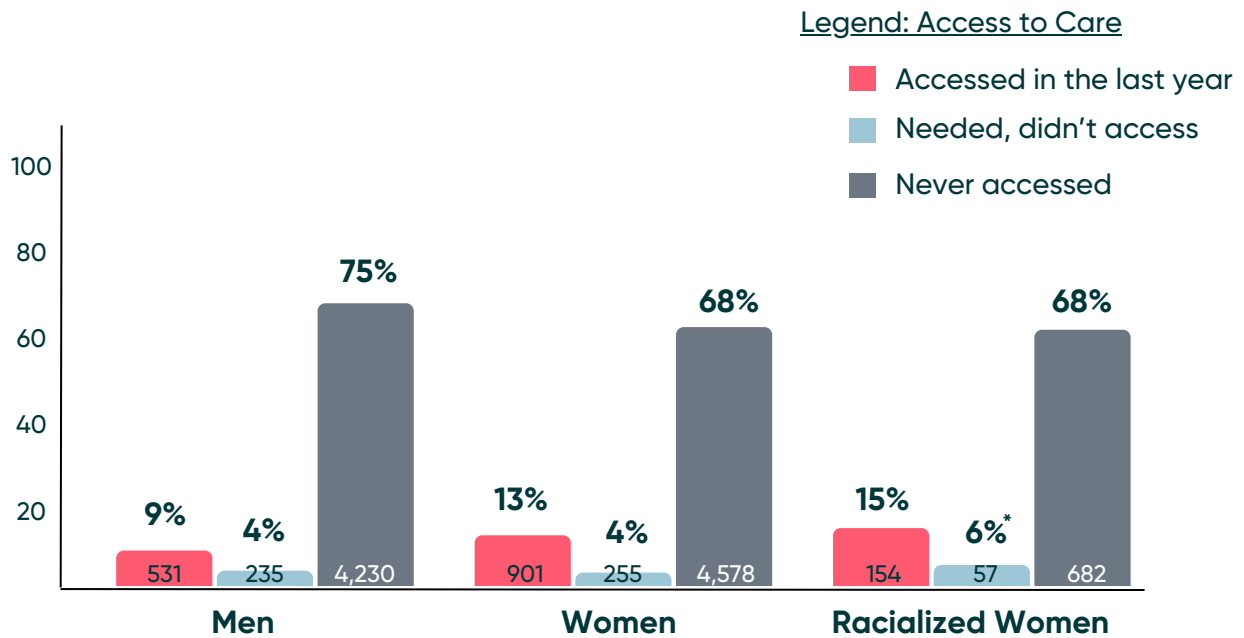


Figure 3. Access to mental health or substance use services, polls 13-17, (July 2022 to August 2023).

* Small samples, interpret with caution. Trends confirmed in larger samples Aug 2021 - Aug 2023

Preliminary trends suggest that **racialized women are 60% more likely than the general population to say they needed care but did not access any** (3.48 % vs 5.62% - a 2% point difference).

7 in 10 Canadians feel satisfied with the care they received (70%) and that their needs were met (66%). However, some groups, particularly **racialized and 2SLGBTQIA+ Canadians, are less likely to be satisfied with the care they received:**

Satisfaction With Care Accessed in the Last Year

70%	71%	69%	66%	67%
National	Women	Men	Racialized Canadians	2SLGBTQIA+ Canadians
Sample sizes				
1,026	636	365	163	156

Preliminary trends suggest that **racialized women may be much less satisfied with care (61%), and less likely to say the care they accessed met their needs (66%) than racialized men (78% satisfaction, 74% needs met).** Note that although sample sizes reported here are small and conclusions should be interpreted with caution, these trends are observed in larger datasets going back to August of 2021.

Satisfaction With Care in the Last Year

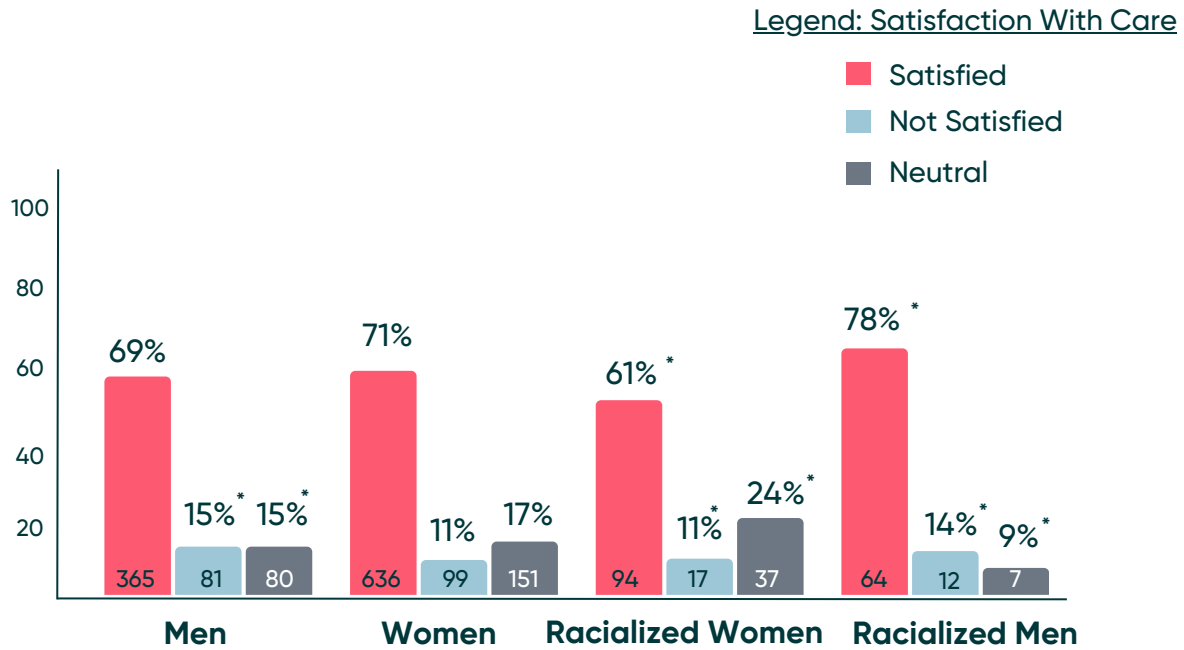


Figure 4. Satisfaction with care in the last year, polls 13-17, (July 2022 to August 2023).

* Small samples, interpret with caution. Trends confirmed in larger samples Aug 2021 - Aug 2023

Needs Met By Services Accessed in the Last Year

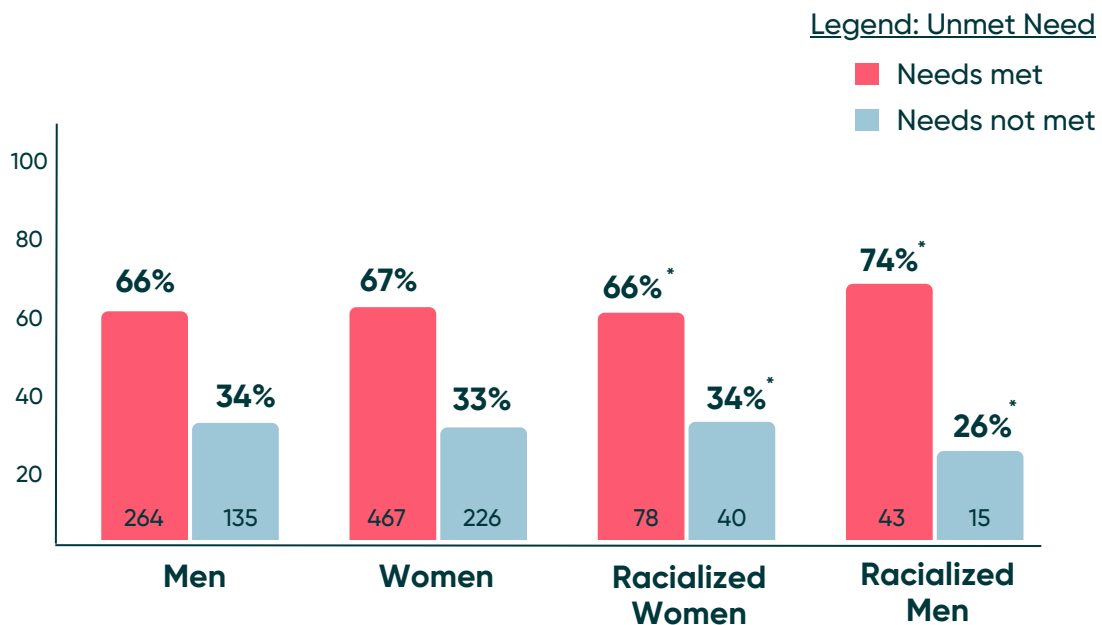


Figure 5. Unmet needs, polls 14-17, (October 2022 to August 2023).

* Small samples, interpret with caution. Trends confirmed in larger samples Aug 2021 - Aug 2023

Women are disproportionately affected by financial barriers.

5% of Canadians said they needed mental health support but didn't access any. Of this group of people, **women (42%) were twice as likely as men (21%) to say it was because of financial barriers to care** (i.e., they couldn't afford it or insurance didn't cover it).

Racialized Canadians are more likely to say they didn't access care because they didn't know where to get this kind of help (35%), preferred to manage mental health on their own (31%), or didn't have confidence in the health care system (20%), compared to the general population.

Barriers to Accessing Mental Health Care

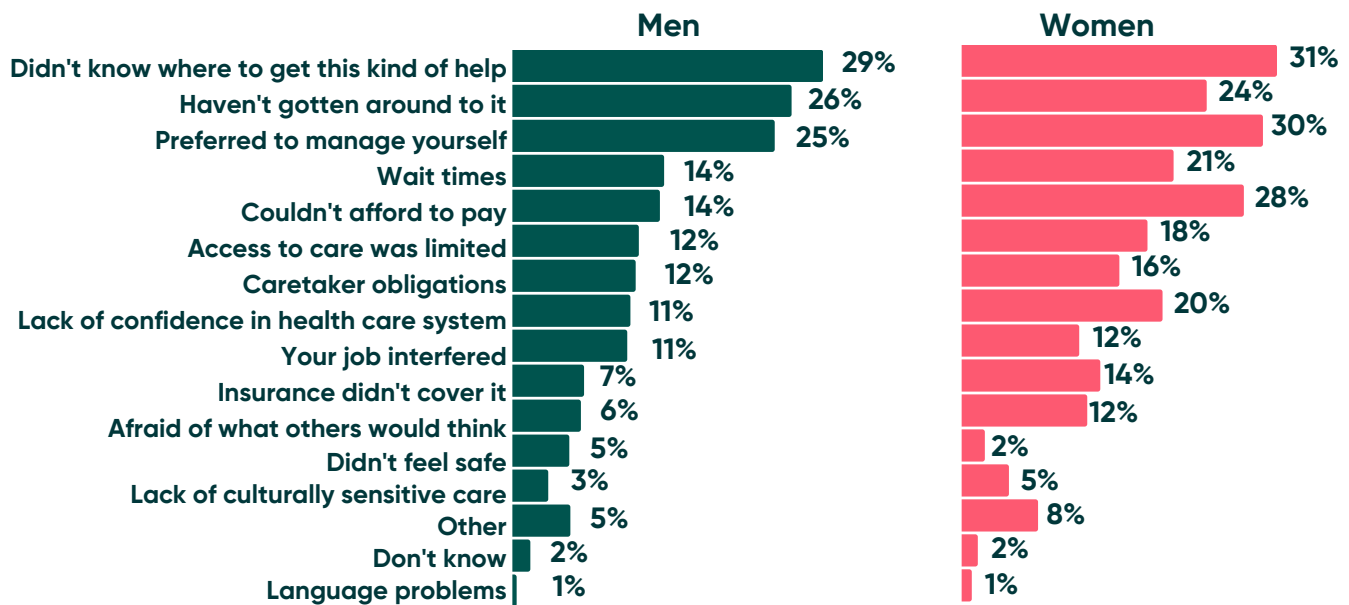


Figure 6. Barriers to care by gender identity and racialized Canadians. Polls 13-17 (July 2022 - August 2023). Note: duplicate respondents not removed. Multiple response-select questions result in sums greater than 100%

Racialized Canadians, particularly women, are less likely to say they are confident in knowing where to access mental health services if themselves or a loved one needed support:

Confidence in Knowing Where to Access Care



Figure 7. Confidence in knowing where to access services. Polls 14 - 17 (October 2022 - August 2023).

Women and equity-deserving groups are more likely to say current economic conditions are impacting their mental health.

MHRC's September 2023 report indicated that financial stressors are having an alarming impact on the mental health of struggling Canadians. The data demonstrated that financial concerns remain a major factor in negative mental health among Canadians. Nationally, **around 7 in 10 Canadians said that the current economic conditions negatively impacted their mental health.**

This data also revealed that **women are more likely to say inflation is impacting their mental health**, compared to men:



Diving deeper into how inflation is directly impacting the lives of Canadians:

- Women are 30% more likely to report they are going into debt a result of the current economic conditions (i.e., pulling from savings account to pay essential living costs or relying on credit to pay essential costs), compared to men – that's an 11% point difference.
- Racialized Canadians are 40% more likely, and 2SLGBTQIA+ Canadians are more than twice as likely, to say they are coping with increasing financial pressures by borrowing money from friends and family to pay essential costs.
- Racialized Canadians and 2SLGBTQIA+ Canadians are more likely than the general population to say they are concerned about paying their rent or mortgage.

Legend: Direct Impact of Inflation

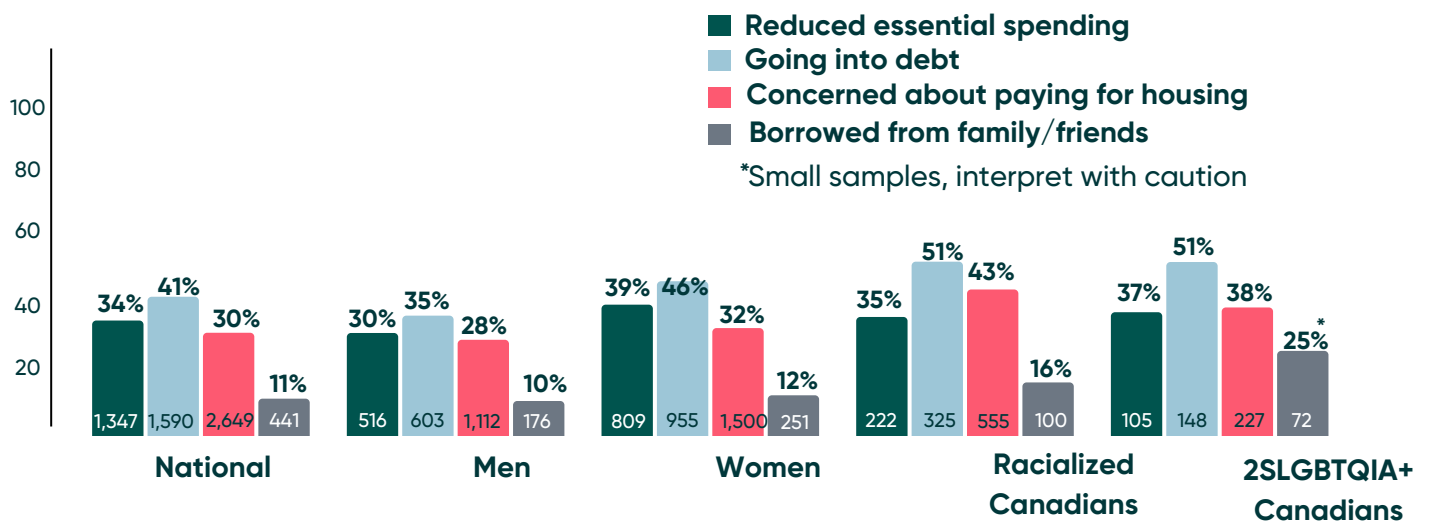


Figure 8. Direct Impact of Inflation on Canadians, polls 14-17, (October 2022 to August 2023).

Conclusion

Using data collected in a series of national surveys in the post-pandemic period, we have gained insight into which equity-deserving Canadians are accessing care, how they perceived the services to meet their needs, and identified barriers to care.

Our analyses revealed that women, particularly those from equity deserving groups, are struggling more with their mental health and despite being more likely to access care, are less likely to get the support they need. By bringing awareness to these gaps, we inform the development of mental health services for women – especially women from equity-deserving groups – and advance better health for all.

The information featured in this report is the result of research conducted by Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC), in collaboration with Greenshield Cares. This work is part of a series of reports published by MHRC in collaboration with other organizations that aim to highlight the inequities surrounding mental health. The trends and relationships observed in this report should be replicated, confirmed and explored further through future data collection.

Limitations

Due to the nature of self-reporting, the information in this report is influenced by how respondents think about, understand and answer questions about their mental health.

Some areas of this report clearly identify analyses with small sample size or mention preliminary trends, indicating that conclusions should be made with caution in these areas. It should be noted that these trends have been observed in larger samples going back to August of 2021, confirming the general patterns in the data are accurate, though exact numbers may fluctuate slightly with future collections. In efforts to retain only the most recent of data in the shifting post-pandemic landscape, small samples are retained for reporting. Replication of these findings pending.

Acknowledgements

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For more information on MHRC's national polling project "Understanding the Mental Health of Canadians through COVID-19 and Beyond" contact Brittany Saab at bsaab@mhrc.ca.

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

