



FACTUM

28,000 Children and Youth on Wait Lists for Mental Health Services in Ontario, With Wait Times Up To 2.5 Years

Ontarians Believe Children and Youth Should Only Wait Up to Two Days, Or Not Wait at All, To Receive Mental Health Care

Toronto, Ontario, February 19, 2020 — One month ago Children’s Mental Health Ontario (CMHO) released the Kids Can’t Wait Report which revealed that there are 28,000 children and youth on wait lists for mental health services in Ontario, and that wait times can be up to 2.5 years for community mental health therapy and treatment programs, with some not receiving treatment at all. New polling conducted on behalf of CMHO finds that Ontarians believe that children and youth should only have to wait up to two days, or *not wait at all*, to receive the mental health care they require.

Ontarians recognize shortfalls within their healthcare system and its ability to provide mental health services in a timely and adequate fashion. When rating the wait times for mental health services in Ontario, half indicate that wait times for these services for adults (47%) are poor, with a comparable proportion saying the same about wait times for children and youth services (45%). Wait times are perceived to be even worse among those living in rural Ontario, who provide a directionally lower rating of wait times for both adults (69% poor vs. 47% in urban Ontario) and children/youth (52% poor vs. 45% in urban Ontario).

Mental Health on Par with Reducing Wait Times for Emergency Services and Long-Term Care for Seniors

Overall, Ontarians perceive the top issues facing their healthcare system to be: access to mental health services (including for adults and/or youth) (40%), reducing wait times for emergency services (38%), long-term care for seniors (30%), and wait times for specialists (30%). For younger Ontarians, and those living in rural communities, mental health services are their top priority, which they believe the Ontario government should focus its efforts on.

Notably, when Ontarians were presented with the reality that there are 28,000 children and youth on wait lists for mental health services in Ontario, and that wait times can be up to 2.5 years for community mental health therapy and treatment programs, 75% say that knowing this information *increases the level of priority* that mental health takes would take on their list of priorities.

Given the perception of poor wait times, it is perhaps unsurprising that when thinking specifically about improving mental health services for children and youth, reducing wait times (46%) is ranked as the top priority for the provincial government to focus its efforts.



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Extending Age Eligibility for Youth to Receive Mental Health Services

When thinking about solutions, to help improve mental health services, there is strong support for extending the age eligibility for youth to receive publicly provided services at Child and Youth Mental Health Centres which currently caps at 18, to include youth up to 25. In fact, eight in ten (81%) Ontarians agree that the provincial government should make this improvement.

Ontarians Confident They Would Know Where to Find Help

Despite recognizing gaps in the system, Ontarians say they are confident that they would know where to get help, if needed. Parents (63%) agree that if they were seeking mental health services for their child, they would know where to get help. This is comparable to the proportion of young adults (55%) who also indicate that if they were experiencing a mental health issue, they would know where to find help.

About the Study

These are the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of Children's Mental Health Ontario.

For the poll a sample of 802 residents of Ontario was surveyed online via the Ipsos I-Say panel from January 22nd to January 24th, 2020.

Quotas and weighting were employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the Ontario population according to census information.

The precision of online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case the results are considered accurate to within +/- 3.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had all Ontario adults been surveyed.

The credibility interval will be wider for subsets of the population.



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