



PRESS RELEASE

Majority (56%) of Canadians Say COVID-19 Having a Negative Impact on their Mental Health

Social Isolation (66%), Concern for Loved Ones (57%), Fear of Contracting COVID-19 (56%) and Financial Concerns (51%) are Leading Causes for COVID-related Mental Health Issues

Toronto, ON, May 11, 2020 — A majority (56%) of Canadians say their mental health has been negatively affected by COVID-19, including 10% who say the impact has been very negative, according to a new Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of Sun Life Financial. A minority (39%) says the pandemic has had no impact on their mental health, while just 5% say their mental state has been positively impacted – a silver lining for a small proportion of Canadians.

Women (62%) are more likely than men (49%) to say their mental health has been negatively impacted, as are those aged 35-54 (65%) and 18-34 (62%) compared to older Canadians aged 55+ (43%). In fact, those under the age of 55 are most likely to say the impact has been very negative (18-34 17%, 35-54 11% vs. 55+ 3%). Regionally, Ontarians (62%) are the most likely across the country to say COVID-19 has had a negative impact on their mental health.

Among those who report that their mental health has been deteriorating, social isolation (66%) is the leading cause, but a majority also cite concern for loved ones (57%), fear of personally contracting COVID-19 (56%), and financial concerns (51%) as reasons for the strain on their mental health. Others point to being unable to access the things they want/need (43%), unemployment or reduced hours (31%), other health concerns (22%), caring for children or other family members (16%), increased workload (11%), or some other reason (6%) as aggravating factors.

Four in ten (42%) of those who report worsening mental health say that they are currently receiving treatment or social support for their mental health, including support from family or friends (28%), treatment from a mental-health professional (16%), or some other type of support (5%). More specifically, those who are currently receiving treatment or support are turning to friends and family (64%), trying to keep busy at home with cooking, hobbies, TV, etc (62%), self-help (e.g. online or other resources) (40%), medical advice/treatment (31%), faith/religious communities (19%), government resources (15%), employer resources/benefits (15%), or are utilizing some other form of support (4%).

Among the 58% of those who are not receiving any support despite reporting that their mental health has been negatively impacted, the leading barriers preventing them from obtaining support include: the belief that they can't afford it (22%), not knowing where to go to or who to ask for help (17%), a lack of access like services are closed or suspended, or long waiting lists (15%), being embarrassed to ask for help (12%), being laid off or unemployed and are without group benefits (8%), being too busy (8%), a lack of privacy in their home to access support (8%), or some other reason (7%). Nearly half (45%) maintain that they don't need support to address their declining mental health.



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Examining the 39% of Canadians who say the pandemic has not impacted their mental health, most say that continuing to have access to the things they need/want (69%) and knowing that their family and friends are safe (69%) are the leading reasons why they've been able to maintain their mental health. Others say that it's because they have a supportive network of friends/family that provides them with the help or support they need (34%), or because they are able to keep working (25%). Some are already receiving treatment from a mental health professional (2%), while 11% say there's some other reason that has enabled them to maintain their mental health through the pandemic.

The sudden move towards physical distancing has caused many Canadians to take stock of their lives and assess the things that the pandemic has made them appreciate more. Presented with a list of 11 possibilities and asked to choose up to 3 items, two thirds (66%) of Canadians say they have a newfound appreciation for their friends and family (66%), while four in ten have a greater appreciation for their physical health (41%), and their freedom (40%). Others have a renewed appreciation for the importance of having "rainy day" savings (33%), for spending time outdoors (32%), and for the value of Canada's social and government programs (29%). One quarter are now more appreciative of their mental health (24%), while others more fully appreciate the empathy or financial support provided by organizations within their community (10%), the value of advice from a trusted source or organization (10%), and the value of working with a financial advisor to review their financial goals (5%) among other things (3%).





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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between April 29 and May 1, 2020, on behalf of on behalf of Sun Life Financial. For this survey, a sample of 1000 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed online. Quotas and weighting were employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the Canadian population according to census parameters. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians aged 18+ been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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