

FACTUM

Six in ten Canadians (60%) Currently Experiencing Mental Health Issues, but More than Half (54%) Haven't Sought Treatment

Affordability, Embarrassment Top Reasons for Not Seeking Help with Mental Health

Toronto, ON, March 4, 2021 – New Ipsos polling for Sun Life has found that a majority of Canadians – six in ten (60%) – are currently experiencing mental health issues. The stress and social isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic are widely reported to have taken a significant toll on mental health for Canadians in all walks of life.

Anxiety tops the list of issues Canadians are coping with: four in ten (40%) say they have anxiety, followed by stress (39%), depression (29%), and addiction (7%).

The survey finds that some mental health issues are affecting specific groups harder than others. For instance, a strong majority of Gen Z and Millennial Canadians (74%) are currently living with mental health issues – a significantly higher proportion than among the Gen X (64%) or Boomer (40%) generations.

Younger Canadians are more likely to be experiencing all types of mental health issues, with a 20-point gap noted between Gen Z and Boomers when it comes to having anxiety (46% vs. 26%), and a 34-point gap between Millennials and Boomers when it comes to living with depression (40% vs. 18%). Nearly two in ten Gen Z Canadians (16%) report experiencing addiction issues, compared to just 2% of Boomers.

Barriers to Seeking Help

Despite the widespread prevalence of mental health issues, many Canadians say they haven't actively tried to get help. More than half (54%) of those currently living with mental health issues say they haven't sought medical support, whether in the form of counselling, psychological support, medication, or something else.

The survey points to some important barriers – like affordability and stigma – that are preventing many from seeking out the help they need. Of those who say they haven't tried to get medical help, one in four (25%) say they simply can't afford it, rising to 32% of Millennials. Meanwhile, nearly one in four (23%) say they are embarrassed to ask for help. Embarrassment is strongest among younger Canadians, with 39% of Gen Z and 27% of Millennials saying it's made them reluctant to ask for help.

Other barriers preventing Canadians from seeking medical support for their mental health issues include being too busy (19%), not knowing where to go or who to ask for help (18%), a lack of privacy at home to access support (15%), not having group benefits coverage due to currently being unemployed or laid off (12%), not having access due to service closure, suspension, or long wait lists (11%), or concern about negative stigma in the workplace (7%). This leaves just three in ten (31%) who say they haven't sought medical care because they don't feel they need it.



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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between January 21 and 25, 2021, on behalf of Sun Life. For this survey, a sample of 1,000 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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