



Mental Health During COVID-19 Outbreak: Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) Report



CANADIAN ALLIANCE
ON MENTAL ILLNESS
AND MENTAL HEALTH

ALLIANCE CANADIENNE
POUR LA MALADIE MENTALE
ET LA SANTÉ MENTALE



MARCH 2023

Methodology

Methodology: This online survey was conducted between January 23, 2023, and February 2, 2023, among a sample of 627 adult Canadians who indicated that they have accessed mental health services or resources during the past year.

Weighting: National results have been weighted by the most current census data in terms of gender, age, & region to ensure the total sample is representative of the population as a whole.

<i>Table 1</i>	Count	Margin of error
Total Canada	627	±3.9%
British Columbia	70	±11.7%
Alberta	91	±10.3%
Saskatchewan	41	±15.3%
Manitoba	50	±13.9%
Ontario	167	±7.6%
Quebec	77	±11.2%
New Brunswick	40	±15.5%
Nova Scotia	46	±14.5%
Newfoundland and Labrador	39	±15.7%

Table 1. Poll Sample Size, Margin of Error, Overall and by Province



Key Findings

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Key findings- Overall summary

General perceptions about access to mental health services available to Canadians is mostly negative

- 47% gave a grade of “F” (four out of ten or lower) when asked about their province’s ability to provide access to a mental health professional for all residents.
- 23% think that the mental health supports available in Canada are meeting peoples’ needs.
- 33% of services that were accessed were covered by public health insurance, 16% paid partially by private insurance, 16% paid in full by private insurance and 12% out-of-pocket.

Roughly one in ten (12%) Canadians have sought help for mental health issues in the past year. Most said they were able to access the services they initially wanted, and most are confident in their ability to navigate the mental health support system

- 12% accessed a mental health or substance use health service or resource in the past year.
- 70% say they were able to access the services they initially wanted.
- 69% say they are somewhat (46%) or very (23%) confident they would know where to get mental health support for themselves or loved ones.
- 66% say the mental health supports they accessed met all (34%) or most (32%) their needs.

There is unanimous concern about wait times in accessing mental health services

- All those who say the support they received met only some of their needs (25%) or did not meet their needs (9%) cite wait lists as the reason.
- A little over a third say their recent experience of waiting to access mental health services was the same as before, with 20% saying it was longer and 16% saying it was shorter.
- 91% feel they should not have to wait more than a month for services. 73% say it should take less than two weeks and 39% say less than a week.
- 89% say it is very (71%) or somewhat (18%) important for provinces to have standards, benchmarks or guidelines for acceptable wait times.
- An overwhelming majority feel that both the Federal (81%) and Provincial (89%) governments need to increase the availability of mental health care providers to ensure timely access to care.

Key findings – Regional differences

Less Quebecers have sought mental health support in the past year compared to other regions. This may have contributed to the shorter wait times. The education sector in Quebec had a higher-than-average rate of those seeking mental health support

- Access to mental health services in the past year was lowest in Quebec (7%).
- Quebecers are more likely to say wait times were shorter than before (QC:29%, Canada:16%).
- They are also less likely to feel the need to have standards for wait times. (QC:61%, Canada:71%)
- Students (QC:17%; Canada: 9%) and educators (QC:20%; Canada: 12%) from Quebec were more likely to seek help for mental health issues during the past year compared to the rest of Canada.

The Prairies witnessed a high rate of residents seeking mental health support in the past year. Despite that, they are less likely to talk about their mental health and men are less likely to seek help in some of the western provinces

- Access to mental health services is higher in the Prairies (AB:16%, SK:20%, MB:24%, Canada :12%).
- The Mid-Western provinces (AB and SK) are less likely to talk about their mental health with family and friends.
- In Alberta and Manitoba, less men sought help for mental health.

Other regions did not show major differences

- Health Care workers in B.C. are the most likely to seek mental health support (BC: 23%, Canada:16%).
- Ontarians are more likely than others to use free online chat, text or phone services (ON: 16%, Canada :10%).
- The Atlantic had a high rate of mental health support access last year (NB:20%, NS:19%,N:24%, Canada: 12%).



Results in Detail

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Provincial Access to Mental Health Professionals



- Half of those who accessed mental health services gave a low rating (below 5 out of ten) when asked about their province’s ability to provide access to a mental health professional to all residents.
- Ontarians were slightly less likely to give a low rating (below 5 out of ten) than others (40%), while Nova Scotians were more likely to give a low rating (68%).

Overall, on a score from 0 (the lowest score) to 10 (the highest score), what score would you give your province or territory when it comes to the ability of all residents to access a mental health professional?



	Total Canada	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba	Ontario	Quebec	New Brunswick	Nova Scotia	NL
Score	4.5	4.3	4.4	3.9	4.1	4.9 ↑	4.6	4.8	3.5 ↓	3.8
Grade	D	D	D	F	D	D	D	D	F	F

B32: Overall, on a score from 0 (the lowest score) to 10 (the highest score), what score would you give your province or territory when it comes to the ability of all residents to access a mental health professional? By Province; n = 627 (Those who accessed services in the past year)
 score= weighted average of scale from 0 to 10

Are Mental Health Supports in Canada Sufficient?

- Just under a quarter say mental health supports available in Canada are meeting peoples’ needs.

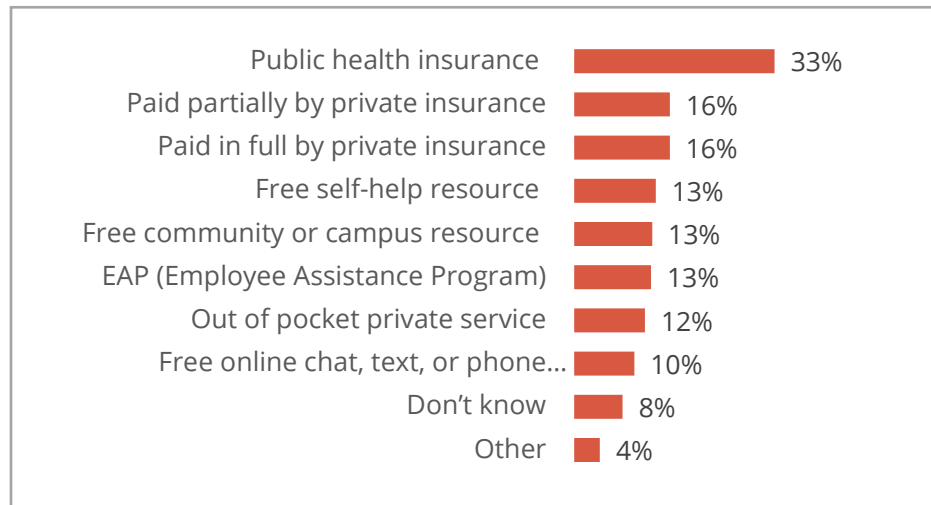
Do you believe the mental health supports available in Canada are meeting peoples’ needs?



	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba	Ontario	Quebec	New Brunswick	Nova Scotia	Newfoundland and Labrador
Yes	19%	23%	17%	19%	26%	26%	41% ↑	14%	17%
No	81%	77%	83%	81%	74%	74%	59% ↓	86%	83%

B26: Do you believe the mental health supports available in Canada are meeting peoples’ needs? By Province; n = 627 (Those who accessed services in the past year)

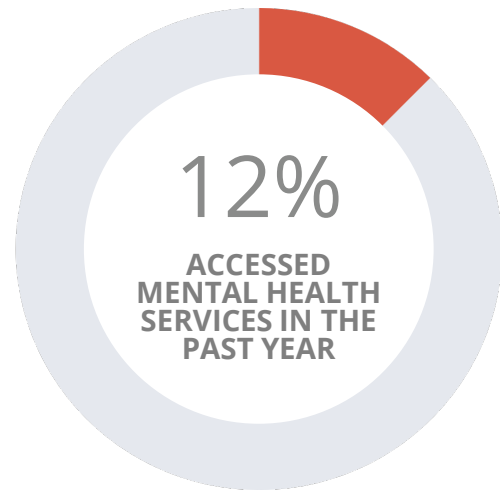
Mental Health Support Funding



- A third of mental health supports that were accessed in the past year were funded by public health insurance. Another third was partially or fully covered by private healthcare insurance and a quarter were freely available community or self-help resources.
- Ontarians are more likely than others to use free online chat, text or phone services.
- Saskatchewanans are least likely to pay out of pocket or use private insurance with full coverage.
- British Columbians are the most likely to use EAP.
- Albertans are more likely than others to rely on partially-covered private health insurance.

Access to Services in the Past Year

- One-in-ten Canadians accessed a mental health or substance use health service in the past year.
- Access to mental health services was lowest in Quebec (7%) and was higher in the Prairies and the Atlantic provinces.



HAVE NOT ACCESSED SERVICES IN THE PAST YEAR	88%
I have never accessed services	69%
I have accessed services more than a year ago	12%
I have felt the need to access mental health services in the past year, but have not actually done so	4%
Prefer not to answer	3%

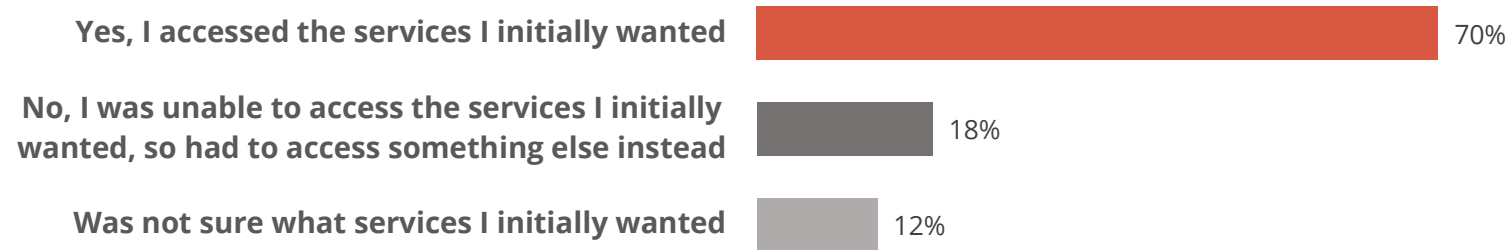
	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba	Ontario	Quebec	New Brunswick	Nova Scotia	Newfoundland and Labrador
Accessed services in the past year	13%	16% ↑	20% ↑	24% ↑	12%	7% ↓	20% ↑	19% ↑	24% ↑

B16: Have you accessed any kind of mental health or substance use service or resource in the past year? by Province; n= 3238

Access to Desired Services

- Majority (70%) say they were able to access the services they initially wanted and only about one-fifth say they accessed something else.
- More Albertans were able to access their desired services than those from other regions.

Were you able to access the services you initially wanted, or did you access something else?



	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba	Ontario	Quebec	New Brunswick	Nova Scotia	Newfoundland and Labrador
Yes, I accessed the services I initially wanted	60%	80% ↑	74%	80%	67%	67%	71%	71%	77%
No, I was unable to access the services I initially wanted, so had to access something else instead	23%	11%	14%	8% ↓	21%	21%	17%	18%	13%
Was not sure what services I initially wanted	17%	10%	12%	12%	12%	12%	12%	12%	10%

B24a: Were you able to access the services you initially wanted, or did you access something else? By Province; n = 627 (Those who accessed services in the past year)

Navigating the Mental Health System

- Majority say they are somewhat (46%) or very (23%) confident they would know where to get mental health support for themselves or loved ones.

If you or someone in your immediate family or circle of friends needed mental health supports, how confident are you that you would know where to get them?



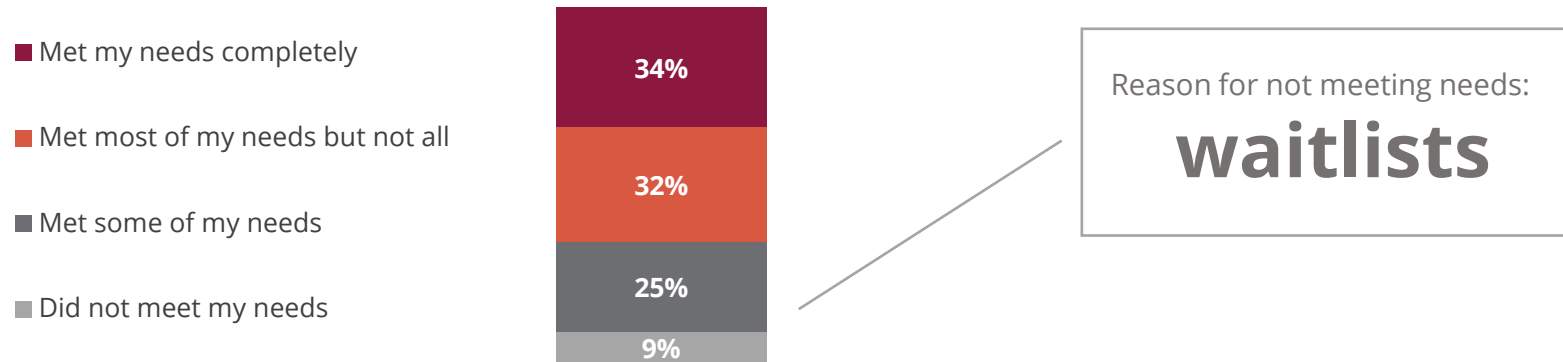
	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba	Ontario	Quebec	New Brunswick	Nova Scotia	Newfoundland and Labrador
Very confident	28%	27%	22%	17%	23%	17%	32%	23%	23%
Somewhat confident	36%	50%	54%	46%	45%	55%	51%	32%	43%
Not very confident	26%	16%	13%	27%	20%	22%	7% ↓	33%	17%
Not at all confident	7%	6%	7%	8%	9%	6%	6%	7%	8%
Don't know	3%	1%	3%	3%	2%	1%	5%	5%	8%

B25: If you or someone in your immediate family or circle of friends needed mental health supports, how confident are you that you would know where to get them? By Province; n = 627 (Those who accessed services in the past year)

Past Experience with Mental Health Support

- Two-thirds say the mental health supports they accessed met all or most their needs.
- All of those who say the support met only some of their needs or did not meet their needs cite wait lists as the reason.

Did the mental health supports you accessed meet your needs?



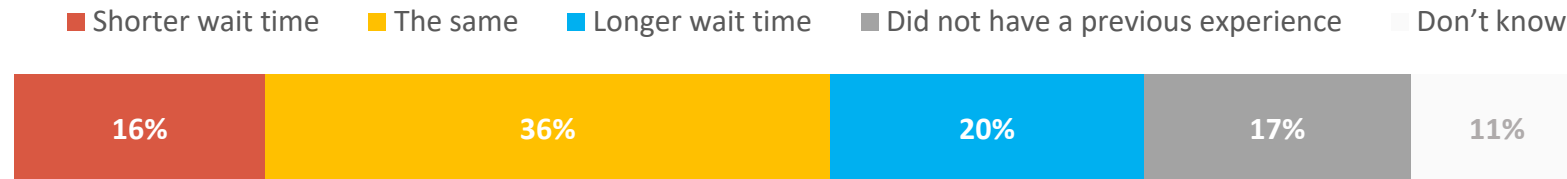
	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba	Ontario	Quebec	New Brunswick	Nova Scotia	Newfoundland and Labrador
Met my needs completely	26%	39%	47%	39%	30%	39%	40%	33%	24%
Met most of my needs but not all	30%	31%	31%	26%	36%	24%	35%	38%	46%
Met some of my needs	30%	24%	13%	22%	26%	30%	21%	18%	21%
Did not meet my needs	14%	7%	9%	14%	8%	7%	4%	10%	9%

B22: Did the mental health supports you accessed meet your needs? By Province; n = 627 (Those who accessed services in the past year)
 B23B: Why didn't the supports you accessed meet all of your needs? n=203 (Those who picked "Met some of my needs" or "Did not meet my needs" in B22)

Wait Times Compared to Previous Experience

- A little over a third say their recent experience of waiting to access mental health services was the same as before.
- One-fifth say the wait time was longer (20%) and a roughly equal proportion say it was shorter(16%) than before.
- Quebecers are more likely to say wait times were shorter than before (29%) .

Thinking about your most recent experience waiting to access mental health services, how does this wait time compare to your previous experience?



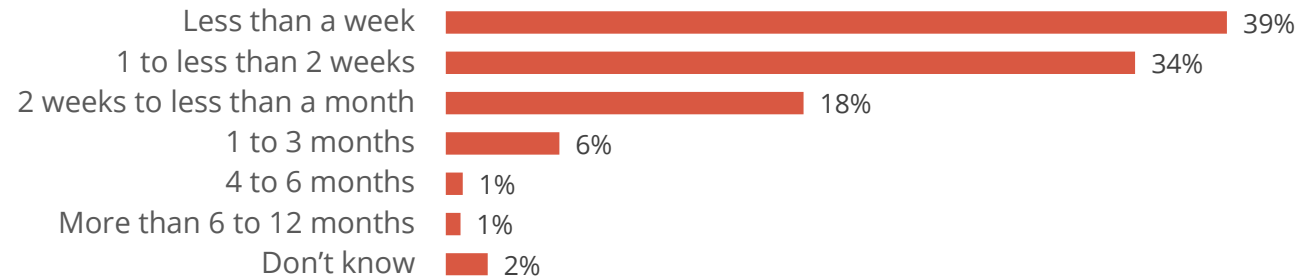
	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba	Ontario	Quebec	New Brunswick	Nova Scotia	Newfoundland and Labrador
Shorter wait time than my previous experience	11%	18%	11%	10%	15%	29% ↑	21%	14%	6%
The same as my previous experience	43%	37%	44%	29%	36%	22% ↓	46%	40%	34%
Longer wait time than my previous experience	22%	15%	19%	21%	20%	21%	11%	23%	27%
Did not have a previous experience accessing mental health services	10% ↓	20%	14%	27%	18%	18%	8%	14%	26%
Don't know	15%	10%	12%	13%	11%	9%	13%	9%	7%

B27: Thinking about your most recent experience waiting to access mental health services, how does this wait time compare to your previous experience? By Province; n = 627 (Those who accessed services in the past year)

Reasonable Wait Times

- When asked about what they felt was a reasonable amount of time between reaching out for mental health or substance use services and the start of these services, one-in-four say it should be less than a week and a third say it should take less than two weeks.

What do you think is a reasonable amount of time between reaching out for ... services and the start of these services?

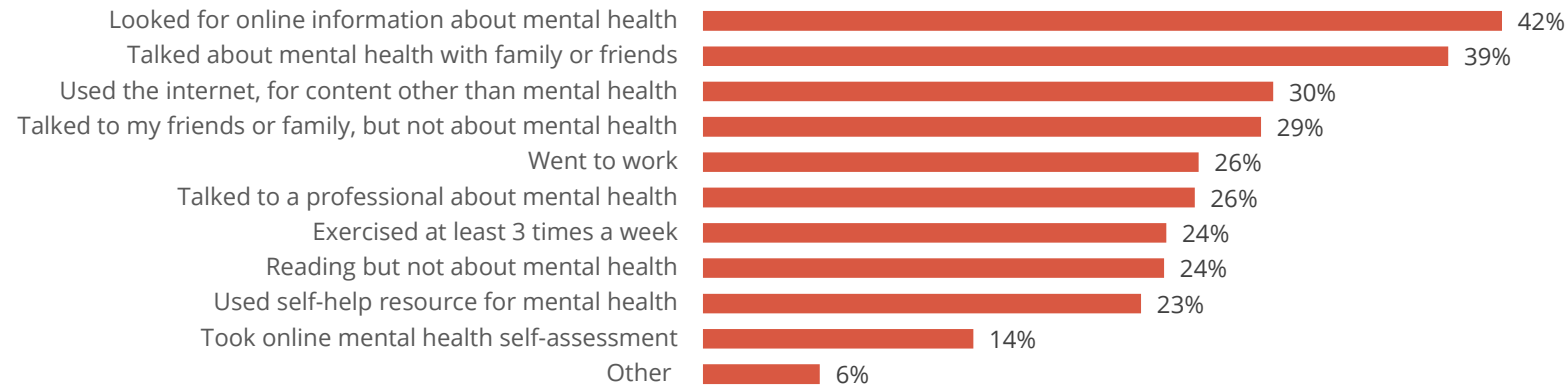


	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba	Ontario	Quebec	New Brunswick	Nova Scotia	Newfoundland and Labrador
Less than a week	42%	36%	52%	34%	35%	44%	42%	30%	51%
1 to less than 2 weeks	40%	49% ↑	26%	39%	28% ↓	29%	29%	59% ↑	22%
2 weeks to less than a month	11%	11%	17%	19%	24% ↑	16%	17%	6% ↓	18%
1 to 3 months	6%	1% ↓	3%	6%	7%	7%	13%	4%	5%
4 to 6 months	0%	0%	1%	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
More than 6 to 12 months	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	4% ↑	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	2%	2%	0%	0%	4% ↑	0%	0%	0%	5%

B30: What do you think is a reasonable amount of time between reaching out for mental health or substance use service and the start of these services (like a mental health assessment, consultation, or first session with a trained professional). By Province; n = 627 (Those who accessed services in the past year)

“Time Fillers” During the Wait

- During the wait time, four-in-ten say they researched mental health topics online and a similar proportion discussed their mental health with family and friends. About quarter talked to a professional, exercised regularly, or used self-help resources.
- The Mid-Western provinces (AB and SK) are less likely to talk about their mental health with family and friends.
- British Columbian are most likely to use online mental health self-assessment tests during their wait.



	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba	Ontario	Quebec	New Brunswick	Nova Scotia	Newfoundland and Labrador
Looked for online information about mental health	49%	34%	28%	40%	46%	46%	40%	31%	29%
Used self-help resource for mental health	24%	27%	19%	13%	27%	13% ↓	27%	25%	23%
Reading but not about mental health	22%	23%	19%	18%	30% ↑	21%	26%	17%	14%
Used the internet, for content other than mental health	27%	39%	19%	30%	31%	30%	23%	27%	21%
Took online mental health self-assessment	26% ↑	11%	9%	7%	14%	15%	6%	11%	16%
Talked about mental health with family or friends	43%	28% ↓	25%	41%	44%	46%	25%	35%	39%
Talked to my friends or family, but not about mental health	28%	26%	33%	37%	31%	27%	16%	34%	22%
Talked to a professional about mental health	21%	19%	27%	25%	30%	30%	21%	23%	29%
Exercised at least 3 times a week	28%	31%	26%	25%	24%	18%	13%	19%	21%
Went to work	28%	26%	20%	20%	27%	25%	31%	23%	21%
Other (please specify)	3%	11%	0%	16% ↑	5%	5%	7%	0%	8%

B28. Thinking about your most recent experience waiting to receive mental health support, did you engage in any of the following “time fillers” during this wait? By Province; n = 627 (Those who accessed services in the past year)

Guidelines for Acceptable Wait Times

- A strong majority (71%) say it is very important for provinces to have standards, benchmarks or guidelines for acceptable wait times to receive mental health or substance use health services.
- Quebecers are less likely to feel it is very important to have standards for wait times.

How important is it to you that your province has standards, benchmarks or guidelines for acceptable wait times to receive mental health or substance use health services?



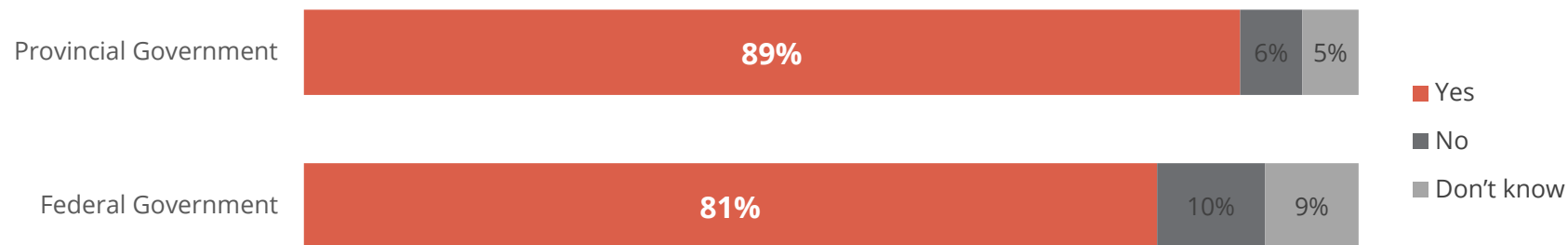
	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba	Ontario	Quebec	New Brunswick	Nova Scotia	Newfoundland and Labrador
Very important	72%	77%	76%	83%	68%	61% ↓	76%	67%	93% ↑
Somewhat important	11%	12%	21%	12%	24% ↑	22%	19%	16%	4% ↓
Neither important nor unimportant	5%	9%	0%	2%	4%	7%	5%	11%	0%
Somewhat unimportant	3%	1%	0%	0%	3%	2%	0%	0%	3%
Very unimportant	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2% ↑	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	9% ↑	1%	3%	3%	1%	5%	0%	6%	0%

B29: The question below asks about service standards for health service delivery and outcomes. Many provinces set service standards for health services delivery and outcomes, meaning there is an expected level of care and time in which this care can be accessed. However only a few provinces set service standards when it comes to mental health services. How important is it to you that your province has standards, benchmarks or guidelines for acceptable wait times to receive mental health or substance use health services? By Province; n = 627 (Those who accessed services in the past year)

Availability of Health Care Providers

- An overwhelming majority feel that both Provincial and Federal governments need to make more mental health and substance use health care providers available to provide timely access to care.

Do you think the following levels of government needs to make more mental health and substance use health care providers available to provide timely access to care?



	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba	Ontario	Quebec	New Brunswick	Nova Scotia	Newfoundland and Labrador
Provincial Government - Yes	81%	91%	95%	95%	87%	92%	80%	97%	95%
Federal Government - Yes	77%	86%	85%	88%	80%	79%	71%	79%	95% ↑

B31: Do you think the following levels of government needs to make more mental health and substance use health care providers available to provide timely access to care? By Province; n = 627 (Those who accessed services in the past year)



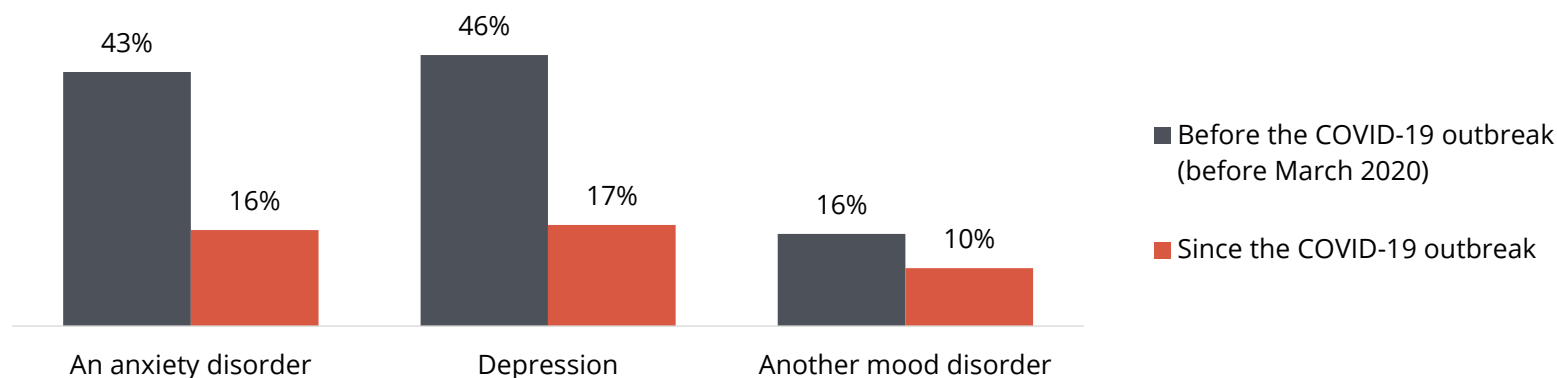
Profiling those who accessed mental health services in the past year



Mood Disorder Diagnosis

- About two thirds of those who accessed mental health services in the past year have a diagnosis of an anxiety disorder and a similar proportion are diagnosed with depression. A quarter are diagnosed with other mood disorders.
- Those who accessed mental health services are three times as likely to be diagnosed with a mood disorder than those who did not.

Mood disorders among those who accessed mental health services



	Before the COVID-19 outbreak (before March 2020) + Since the COVID-19 outbreak																	
	Total Canada		British Columbia		Alberta		Saskatchewan		Manitoba		Ontario		Quebec		New Brunswick		Nova Scotia	
	Accessed support	Did not access	Accessed support	Did not access	Accessed support	Did not access	Accessed support	Did not access	Accessed support	Did not access	Accessed support	Did not access	Accessed support	Did not access	Accessed support	Did not access	Accessed support	Did not access
An anxiety disorder	60%	20%	63%	20%	56%	18%	67%	26%	59%	14%	57%	20%	60%	19%	62%	21%	68%	23%
Depression	64%	22%	74%	22%	68%	25%	66%	21%	75%	23%	59%	23%	50%	18%	56%	17%	75%	26%
Another mood disorder	26%	8%	42%	10%	25%	9%	20%	1%	18%	7%	24%	7%	23%	8%	23%	6%	17%	6%

A1A: Have you ever, either before the COVID-19 outbreak or since it, received a diagnosis from a healthcare professional stating that you are affected by any of the following (flattened) By Province; n = 627 (Those who accessed services in the past year)

Shaded cells show significantly higher/lower than those who did not access services

Gender

- Less men accessed services in the past year than women. This is driven by Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

	Total Canada	
	Accessed support	Did not access
Woman	59%	50%
Man	39%	49%
Another gender identity	2%	1%

Age

- Canadians under thirty are the most likely age group to have accessed mental health services in the past year. This trend is strongest in British Columbia and Quebec.
- Meanwhile, those above sixty were less likely to access mental health services. This was driven by Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

	Total Canada	
	Accessed support	Did not access
16 to 30 years	26%	18%
31 to 40 years	20%	17%
41 to 50 years	18%	15%
50 to 60 years	18%	16%
Above 60 years	17%	34%

Minority Groups

- Individuals with a physical impairment were more likely to access mental health services, across most provinces.
- Members of the LGBTQ2S+ community were more likely to access services, driven by Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick.

Column Comparisons	Total Canada	
	Accessed support	Did not access
A visible minority	15%	15%
An individual with a physical impairment	10%	3%
A member of the LGBTQ2S+ community	15%	6%
No, none of the above	64%	75%

Household Income

- Those within a lower income bracket (Less than \$80,000) were more likely to access mental health services. This is especially true for Ontarians.

	Total Canada	
	Accessed support	Did not access
Less than \$80,000	53%	48%
Less than \$150,000	29%	31%
\$150,000 or More	10%	12%

Z2: Approximately, what was your total household income from all sources in 2022, before taxes?

Shaded cells show significantly ■ higher / ■ lower than those who did not access services

Employment status

- Part-time employees and those who are not employed were more likely to seek mental health supports. While those who are retired were less likely to seek support.
- Students in Quebec and Nova Scotia were more likely to have accessed mental health services.

Column Comparisons	Total Canada	
	Accessed support	Did not access
Full-time employee	45%	42%
Retired	15%	29%
Part-time employee	12%	9%
Student	9%	7%
Self-employed	7%	5%
Not employed – and not looking for work	8%	5%
Unemployed- looking for work	3%	2%

Employment Sector

- Health Care workers are the most likely to seek mental health support, especially in British Columbia.
- Those working in professional settings were less likely to seek mental health support.
- Educators in Quebec were more likely to seek help for mental health issues.

Column Comparisons	Total Canada	
	Accessed support	Did not access
Health Care	16%	12%
Retail, restaurants and accommodations	13%	11%
Financial, professional, and technology Service	12%	19%
Education	12%	9%
Construction	3%	5%
Arts and cultural industries	3%	4%
Transportation, trucking, warehousing, trade and distribution	3%	3%
Manufacturing	2%	8%
Emergency / protective services - Police, Fire, EMT	2%	1%

SCR8: And which one of the following sectors do you primarily work in?

Shaded cells show significantly ■ higher / ■ lower than those who did not access services

Education

- Education level did not impact the likelihood of accessing mental health services during the past year.

Row Comparisons	Total Canada	
	Accessed support	Did not access
Non-degree holders	37%	35%
University or College degree holders	62%	64%

Z1: What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

Shaded cells show significantly ■ higher / ■ lower than those who did not access services