

Mental Health by The Numbers



For decades mental health was only talked about behind closed doors. To admit that you were living with depression or anxiety was considered shameful or a sign of personal weakness. Thankfully we know better and are starting to do better. We now recognize that mental health is no different from physical health as the brain can be affected by illness just like any other part of the body.

Though some people may be more susceptible than others due to genetic or environmental factors, we are all at risk of facing a mental health concern at some point in our lives. Understanding just how common mental health issues are is an important step towards de-stigmatizing them and treating them quickly and appropriately. Let's take a look at mental health in Canada by the numbers:

- **1 in 5** Canadians experience a mental illness in any given year.
- **1 in 2** Canadians have, or have had, a mental illness before the age of 40.
- **4,000** Canadians die by suicide each year, an average of almost 11 per day.
- **500,000** employed Canadians are unable to work in any given week, due to mental health issues.
- The estimated economic burden of mental illness in Canada is **51 billion dollars** per year.

Mental health issues can affect anyone, at any age, but studies show that students and youth may be particularly vulnerable. Young people aged 15 to 24 are more likely to experience mental illness and/or substance use disorders than any other age group. The statistics surrounding youth mental health are alarming.

- **70%** of mental health problems have their onset during childhood or adolescence.
- **34%** of Ontario high school students indicate a moderate-to-serious level of psychological distress.
- **14%** of Ontario high school students indicate a serious level of psychological distress.
- After accidents, suicide is the second leading cause of death for people **aged 15-24**.

Canadian colleges and universities have long recognized the risk to their student populations and have been quick to adapt their healthcare strategies and dedicate additional resources. Still, the demand for support services continues to outpace most schools' capacity to help. Data compiled by the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations shows a troubling spike:

- **1 in 3** students reported that mental health services at post-secondary institutions do not meet their diverse needs;
- **75%** of students reported struggling with their mental health over the course of their post-secondary studies;
- Top barriers to access included wait times, ignorance of how to access services, and quality of services, with **3 in 4 students** unaware of how to access on-campus services;
- **59%** of students prefer accessing mental health support in-person;
- **Over 50%** of students across Canada also indicated that stigma played a significant role in their inability to access mental health services

At guard.me taking care of students is our business and our mission. That's why we launched keep.meSAFE, a student mental health support program designed to complement and extend existing, and often stretched, on-campus resources by connecting students with culturally and linguistically matched counsellors, when they need it most, 24/7, 365 days a year.

Sources

<https://www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/the-crisis-is-real/mental-health-statistics>

https://assets.nationbuilder.com/casaacae/pages/3470/attachments/original/1664377984/Abacus_Report_2022_%281%29.pdf?1664377984