



Strong Majority of Canadians Want Improved Access to Psychologists

January 5, 2021 (Ottawa) – Canada and countries throughout the world increasingly recognize the importance of mental health to the success of their citizens, economies and societies. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed a significant burden on our mental health and wellbeing, making the need for timely access to mental health care even more urgent.

The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) and the Council of Professional Associations of Psychologists (CPAP) asked Nanos Research to survey over 3,000 Canadians to better understand how they perceive the role of psychologists, the barriers and solutions to accessing care, and the quality of care they receive.

“This survey shines a light on the importance Canadians place on their mental health and the value they place on psychologists in helping people address their mental health problems”, said Dr. Karen Cohen, CEO, CPA. “Canadians are clear that Canada needs innovative and sustainable solutions across the public and private sectors that will improve timely access to evidence-based mental health care for people who need it”.

“The need for additional investments to care for those with mental health and substance use problems has never been more acute”, said Mr. Christopher Cameron, CPAP Executive Director. “More specialized and individual care will be needed by those Canadians with pre-existing mental health conditions and by those who develop them as a result of COVID-19”.

The survey found:

Barriers to Access Care

- **78%** of Canadians report that psychological services costing too much for them to pay for themselves is a very significant (52%) or somewhat significant (26%) barrier.
- **73%** of Canadians say that the services of psychologists are not being covered by provincial/territorial health plans is a very significant (47%) or significant (26%) barrier.
- **68%** of Canadians say wait times to see a psychologist being too long is a very significant (35%) or somewhat significant (33%) barrier.
- **66%** of Canadians say that psychological services not being covered by their employer’s health benefit plan is a very significant (40%) or somewhat significant (26%) barrier.
- **46%** of Canadians say that preferring to deal with these problems/disorders on their own is a very significant (16%) or somewhat significant (30%) barrier.
- **39%** of Canadians say not wanting others to know they are seeing a psychologist is a very significant (14%) or somewhat significant (25%) barrier.

Solutions to Improve Access to Care

- Almost **9 out of 10** Canadians (57%) support or somewhat support (31%) improving access to psychologists through the publicly-funded health care system.

- **83%** of Canadians say psychologists working collaboratively with other health professionals, such as a family physician in primary care teams, is a very good idea (50%) or good idea (33%).
- **76%** of Canadians think that better access (more funded mental health care services and higher financial caps) to psychologists through their employer health benefit plan is a very good idea (42%) or good idea (34%).

A majority of Canadians perceive psychologists as being effective in *helping* people with specific mental health problems like depression, anxiety, learning disabilities, dementia, addiction, and the stress of being diagnosed with a disease. Canadians also perceive psychologists as being effective in diagnosing people with mental health problems like depression, anxiety, learning disabilities, dementia and addiction.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reached beyond our physical health and we are likely to feel its psychological and social impacts for some time to come. We must invest and protect our most valuable assets...people. There is no health without mental health. The CPA is committed to working collaboratively with all levels of government, employers and insurers to ensure that Canadians receive evidence-based care where, and when, they need it. The time to act is now.

To review the results in detail – which includes a breakdown by provinces and territories, gender and age, please to the CPA’s website: www.cpa.ca.

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About the CPA

The Canadian Psychological Association is the national voice for the science, practice and education of psychology in the service of the health and welfare of Canadians. The CPA is Canada’s largest association for psychology and represents psychologists in public and private practice, university educators and researchers, as well as students. Psychologists are the country’s largest group of regulated and specialized mental health providers, making our profession a key resource for the mental health treatment Canadians need.

About CPAP

The Council of Professional Association of Psychologists is comprised of 13 national, provincial and territorial psychology associations, and has four objectives: facilitating knowledge exchange amongst member associations; identify and share best practices amongst member associations; advocating for the needs of Canadian psychologists and the people that they support; and develop leadership potential and capacity in Canadian psychologists.

About the Survey

Nanos Research conducted a representative online survey of 3,070 Canadians, drawn from a non-probability panel between September 25th and October 2nd, 2020. The results were statistically checked and weighted by age and gender using the latest Census information and the sample is geographically stratified to be representative of Canada. The research was commissioned by the Canadian Psychological Association and was conducted by Nanos Research.

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