



Happy new year, and I hope you enjoyed the holidays! To prepare for our upcoming meeting together, I've been briefed on the tremendous work that the Research Committee has already accomplished, and I look forward to collaborating with you to continue this progress. I welcome any questions or feedback you have at any time — feel free to get in touch with me.

Aristotle Voineskos
VP Research, CAMH



Anxiety patterns in Canadians mirror progression of pandemic

National survey series by CAMH and Delvinia tracked 2020 pandemic mental health and substance use

The last of six planned 2020 surveys by CAMH and research technology and consumer data collection company Delvinia conducted since mid May 2020 reveals a pattern that anxiety levels fluctuated during the course of the pandemic, highest in the spring and late fall, and lowest over the summer months, whereas symptoms of depression and loneliness remained relatively stable.

“These changes in anxiety amongst Canadians correspond to how the pandemic evolved since we started collecting these data, with fewer COVID-19 cases and looser public health restrictions over the summer, but increasing cases and more restrictions in the fall,” said [Dr. Tara Elton-Marshall](#), Independent

Scientist in the [Institute for Mental Health Policy Research](#) at CAMH. “We will now take the opportunity to delve deeper into the data gleaned from these surveys to better understand the nuances of how the pandemic has affected Canadians’ mental health.”

Another theme that emerged is that the mental health of women, parents and younger adults appears to be particularly affected during the pandemic. For example, the survey of 1,003 adults, conducted between November 27 and December 1, 2020—as we entered into the holiday season—found that nearly a quarter of women (24.3 per cent) reported feeling depressed occasionally or most of the time in the past week, which is significantly higher than among men (18.9 per cent). As in previous surveys, those aged 60-plus were less likely to indicate moderate to severe anxiety (11.8 per cent), whereas those aged 18-39 were more likely to indicate moderate to severe anxiety (33.2 per cent).

Other key findings

- 24.3 per cent of survey respondents had moderate to severe anxiety levels. Over all six surveys, respondents with children under 18 in the household reported higher levels of anxiety as compared to those without children in this age group.
- 23.3 per cent of respondents reported that they felt lonely occasionally or most of the time in the past week. Over all six surveys, women reported higher levels of loneliness as compared to men.
- 21.7 per cent of participants reported feeling depressed occasionally or most of the time in the past week.
- The top activities engaged in by participants to help cope with the pandemic included connecting socially with friends or family online or over the phone (92.3 per cent), making time to relax (91.2 per cent), and following a routine (91.9 per cent).
- 19.4 per cent of participants reported seeking help for mental health concerns from a counsellor or health care provider (online or in person) at least once during the past week.

More than a quarter (25.7 per cent) of participants reported binge drinking in the previous week. “That number is too high—and did not significantly change over recent months, despite the ups and downs of the pandemic,” said CAMH Psychiatrist Dr. David Gratzer. “High levels of drinking are less than ideal and could haunt people. After all, alcohol is addictive. The longer people engage in this unfortunate coping strategy, the harder it will be to change, I suspect.”

“The sixth survey we ran in collaboration with CAMH continues to highlight the struggles Canadians are

having with their mental health during the pandemic," said Adam Froman, Founder and CEO of Delvinia. "It is critical that we continue to shine a spotlight on these issues and provide data like this to the general public via platforms like Methodify. It is only with understanding the problems that we can begin to properly address them."

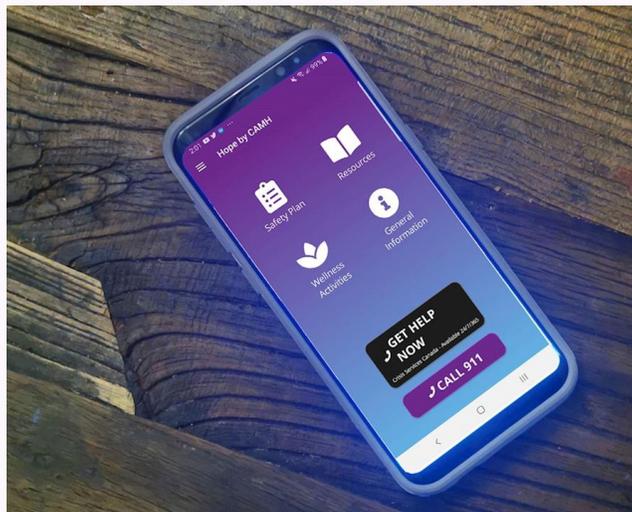
Dr. Hayley Hamilton, Senior Scientist in the Institute for Mental Health Policy Research at CAMH, added: "The long-term mental health effects of the pandemic are as yet unknown. While this is our final planned 2020 survey, CAMH researchers are considering subsequent research to better understand and respond to the mental health fallout of the pandemic and monitor its after-effects. What we do know for certain is that there has long been an under-investment in mental health. We need adequate funding to make sure we have research and health supports for Canadians' mental wellness, including a focus on mental health promotion, prevention and treatment."

Survey methodology

The series is made possible by a collaboration with Methodify by Delvinia, an automated research platform that connects organizations to real people to gain actionable data and insights. Results are based on responses from 1,003 English-speaking Canadians ages 18 and older via an online survey of the Asking Canadians web panel, reflecting a distribution of age, gender and region. The survey was in market between November 27 and December 1, 2020.

See an [interactive dashboard](#) highlighting findings from each of the six surveys.

Visit camh.ca/covid19 for a variety of resources, including tips, coping strategies and resources regarding mental health and substance use during the pandemic.



New initiatives and recognitions

New grant for CAMH-developed suicide safety planning smartphone app

CAMH researchers and developers who created [Hope by CAMH](#), a suicide safety planning smartphone app, have received a \$17,500 grant from HIROC. The grant will enable the team to complete the first cycle of implementing the app into an outpatient clinic.

The team designed the app to replace the current paper-based safety planning that happens across CAMH, with the goal to improve fidelity of safety planning. Safety planning through smartphone apps is a feasible strategy to replace pen-and-paper safety planning, due to the accessibility, widespread reach and inexpensive implementation of smartphone apps, while also allowing for added patient instruction and education.

Through the research, the team will implement the app for all patients in the clinic who are willing and have a smartphone. [Dr. Gillian Strudwick](#), Chief Nursing Executive (Interim) and Independent Scientist, and Nicole Thomson, Senior Director of Quality Innovation, Patient Safety & Experience, are leading the study.

Learn more about the Hope by CAMH app, which is available for free on Android and iOS, in this [CAMH article](#).

Federal funding for COVID-19 mental health initiative

A CAMH initiative is one of six projects that received federal funding for research and development to address COVID-19 gaps and challenges. The federal Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry [announced \\$796,000 in funding from the National Research Council of Canada \(NRC\)](#) through the Pandemic Response Challenge program in the fall. CAMH received \$199,000 to design, develop and clinically validate self-care mobile application modules to reduce stress and other mental health symptoms related to COVID-19. This initiative is led by [Dr. Peter Selby](#), Clinician Scientist in the Addictions Division and Senior Medical Consultant at CAMH.

To date, CAMH has received 11 CIHR grants for COVID-related research, totalling more than \$1.6 million. These grants are focused on synthesizing the evidence to address gaps in the mental health and substance use response to COVID-19, and to identify relevant interventions and containment measures.

CAMH COVID publications making global impacts for 2020

Four research articles by CAMH researchers — each addressing COVID-19 and mental health — are top publications for 2020, with high-impact publication metrics. These metrics reflect the influential reach of these publications within the scientific community and/or the general public. The articles are:

- **The top two most-downloaded articles of 2020 in *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*:**

1. [COVID-19 Impacts on Child and Youth Anxiety and Depression: Challenges and Opportunities](#)

Lead author [Dr. Darren Courtney](#)

11,248 downloads

2. [Impacts of COVID-19 on Youth Mental Health, Substance Use, and Well-being: A Rapid Survey of Clinical and Community Samples](#)

Lead author [Dr. Lisa Hawke](#)

3,525 downloads

See the [list of 10 most-downloaded articles of 2020 in *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*](#).

- **The top-scoring article for 2020 in *Schizophrenia Bulletin*:**

[The COVID-19 Global Pandemic: Implications for People With Schizophrenia and Related Disorders](#)

Lead author [Dr. Nicole Kozloff](#)

The top-scoring article for the year, as measured by scientific publications monitoring tool Altmetric, with a score in the top five per cent of all research outputs scored by Altmetric. The article's reach included 27 news stories from 27 outlets, and sharing on social media by more than 95 people worldwide.

See the [list of five top-scoring articles for 2020 in *Schizophrenia Bulletin*](#).

- **The most-cited article for 2020 in *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*:**

[Anticipating and Mitigating the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias](#)

Lead author **Dr. Eric Brown**

72 citations, in scientific articles by researchers from around the world, including a paper in *The Lancet Psychiatry*

See the [list of five most-cited articles for 2020 in *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*](#).

Get In Touch!

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