
RELEASE

New research: Canadian leaders confident in their support for employees; agree the role is much more difficult due to pandemic

Winnipeg, MB, November 16, 2021. . . As the pandemic continues to change the way we work, Workplace Strategies for Mental Health, compliments of Canada Life teamed up with Mental Health Research Canada to find out more about how leaders are feeling about work.

In the first release of the research, conducted in September 2021, leaders were asked to rate the extent to which they engaged in strategies to support the psychological health and safety of their team members.

Leadership more difficult during the pandemic – especially for those working on-site

Almost half (43%) of managers surveyed found their role to be more difficult because of the pandemic while only 4% reported it's less difficult now. More interesting, leaders working on-site, even for part of the time, were more likely to say the pandemic has made their role more difficult, with 48% of leaders reporting increased challenges.

“Many leaders are facing challenges they’ve never had to deal with before,” says Mary Ann Baynton, Director of Collaboration and Strategy, Workplace Strategies for Mental Health. “But for employees who were working on-site since the start of the pandemic, and for those who were working from home and are now transitioning back, the fear of COVID-19 exposure can bring unique concerns to the workplace – concerns that leaders may not have had to deal with before now.”

Leaders confident in a number of areas – falling behind in others

When it comes to supporting employee mental health, leaders were confident they demonstrated skills in many areas, including:

- Communications and collaboration (79.5%)
- Social intelligence (84%)
- Problem solving and conflict management (81%)
- Security and safety (81.5%)

“Interestingly, we found the results are consistent across industry sectors and across provinces,” says Michael Cooper, Vice-President, Development and Strategic Partnerships, Mental Health Research Canada. “We also found that both older leaders and women rated themselves slightly higher than younger and male leaders.”

However, areas leaders found most challenging when supporting employees included:

- Handling emotional reactions
- Monitoring employees’ goals
- Fostering a sense of purpose
- Providing opportunities for growth

“It’s not surprising leaders feel they aren’t effective dealing with emotional reactions in times of high stress” says Baynton. “This isn’t an area where all have adequate training or resources that are easy to access. For those leaders who strongly agreed they help their employees when pressure is high, we find

they're also more likely to recognize when employees are disengaged and refer them to the proper mental health supports.”

Supports are available

So, what can leaders do when they are uncomfortable handling the emotional reactions of their employees? On the [Workplace Strategies for Mental Health website](#) leaders can take the Psychologically Safe Leader Assessment, then access tools, resources and supports for the areas where they scored the lowest. However, leaders don't have to take the assessment to access the resources – they're available to anyone at any time they're needed.

You can also see how leaders across Canada rated their psychologically safe leadership skills by reviewing the [2021 leader survey results](#).

About The Canada Life Assurance Company

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About Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

Established in 2007, Workplace Strategies for Mental Health is a leading source of free and practical tools and resources designed to help with the prevention, intervention and management of workplace mental health issues. Around the world, Canada is recognized as a leader in workplace mental health. Many individuals and organizations contributed to this distinction, and it's been a privilege to play a part in many important initiatives. For more information, visit the website at [WorkplaceStrategiesforMentalHealth.com](#).

About Mental Health Research Canada

Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC) is a national, charitable organization dedicated to improving the lives of the **1 in 5 Canadians living with mental illness**, as well as their families, caregivers and communities. We advance evidence-based mental health knowledge that is problem-solving and applicable in the real world.

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