
RELEASE

Two thirds of Canadians say their employer has supported their mental health during pandemic

New research also demonstrates many value workplace flexibility over financial support

Winnipeg, MB, February 19, 2021. . . As the world approaches one year of navigating COVID-19, Workplace Strategies for Mental Health, compliments of Canada Life, is releasing new research that shows 68% of employed Canadians have felt supported by their employers throughout the pandemic. The research was conducted in December 2020, together with Mental Health Research Canada and Queens University.

“It’s been almost a year since the pandemic first took hold in Canada, and while vaccines are rolling out, there’s still a lot of uncertainty,” said Mary Ann Baynton, Director, Collaboration and Strategy, Workplace Strategies for Mental Health. “Without the right support, that sense of uncertainty can cause significant distress – and it carries over into the workplace. That’s where employers can play a vital role.”

86% of respondents from a smaller sample, who answered open-ended questions, indicated things like social check-ins, flexible work arrangements and access to mental health resources were more helpful than financial support. Only 9% indicated things like bonuses and pay raises helped support their mental health.

Supports were rated just as helpful regardless of gender, age, education level, income, job status (full-time or part-time) or having contracted COVID-19.

Respondents indicated the three most helpful mental health supports from their employer were:

- Mental health-specific resources, like information on existing or available tools and services (32%).
- Flexible work arrangements, like working from home or working during different hours of the day (31%).
- Frequent communication and check-ins, including video conferencing, emails and other electronic social supports (23%).

“It’s not entirely surprising that financial support was less important to these respondents, since they’re currently employed. They may simply feel fortunate to have work when so many other Canadians don’t,” says Baynton. “The good news is, research clearly shows there are simple actions employers can take that make a difference, like making well-being part of everyday conversation at work, picking up the phone to ask how someone is doing or pointing them to available resources that can help.”

Other key findings from this new research show:

- **Employed Canadians with previous mental health issues are not at greater risk of COVID-related distress.**
All employees are at equal risk. There was no statistically significant difference of COVID-related distress between employees who have experienced mental health issues in the past and those who haven’t.
- **Females are experiencing more distress than males.**
One exception to the risk of experiencing mental distress is gender. 56% of female respondents indicated they’re experiencing COVID-related distress, while only 44% of male respondents said the same.
- **Resilience was a key factor in overcoming distress.**
Those who scored their personal resilience level as medium or high were less likely to experience COVID-related distress. At the same time, 50% of respondents indicated they have low personal resilience, putting them at greater risk.

.../2

The survey collected responses from 1,600 employed adults in Canada (excluding those in Northern territories) with a margin of error of $\pm 1.9\%$. Of those respondents, 306 answered open-ended questions about specific, helpful supports.

About The Canada Life Assurance Company

[Canada Life](#) is a leading insurance, wealth management and benefits provider focused on improving the financial, physical and mental well-being of Canadians. For more than 170 years, individuals, families and business owners across Canada have trusted us to provide sound guidance and deliver on the promises we've made.

As of January 1, 2020, Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life became one company – Canada Life, and today, we proudly serve more than 13 million customer relationships from coast to coast to coast.

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.

- end -

For more information contact:

Liz Kulyk
Assistant Vice-President, Media & Public Affairs
Canada Life
204-391-8515
Media.Relations@canadalife.com

Barbara Kelly
Director of Communications
Mental Health Research Canada
647-408-9499
barbarak@mhrc.ca