The COVID-19 Pandemic and Stress
The COVID-19 pandemic has affected individuals, families, and communities in several ways. Almost 7 out of 10 Canadians reported being negatively impacted by COVID-19.
Almost 2 out of 5 Canadians reported some level of distress in the past month. With social distancing and repeated lockdown measures, feelings of isolation and loneliness can increase levels of anxiety and depression.

Symptoms of anxiety (GAD) and depression (MDD) in Canadians aged 18+

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>% of Canadians screened positive for GAD</th>
<th>% of Canadians screened positive for MDD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Groups with higher prevalence

- **Indigenous identity**: 2X higher among Indigenous groups compared to non-Indigenous groups
- **Frontline workers**: 1.5X higher than those who are not frontline workers
- **Those with decreased income due to the COVID-19 pandemic**: 1.5X higher than those who had increased income

Alcohol and cannabis

Since the beginning of the pandemic, 16% of Canadians reported an increase in alcohol consumption, and 5% reported an increase in cannabis use.

Compared to those who did not screen positive for GAD and/or MDD, those who screened positive were more likely to report:

- **Daily or almost daily heavy drinking**
- **Daily cannabis use**

Anxiety and depression

Feelings of anxiety and depression are some of the most common symptoms of mental health conditions. Anxiety symptoms may include:
- Excessive and constant feelings of nervousness
- Worry and fear
Depression symptoms may include:
- Lack of energy
- Agitation
- Lowering of a person’s mood

Diagnosing a disorder related to symptoms of anxiety or depression requires a trained and licensed clinician. The Survey on COVID-19 and Mental Health used symptom-based screening tools to identify individuals with moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety and depression (i.e., those who would screen positive for generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) or major depressive disorder (MDD)).

As the pandemic continues, it is important to learn how to cope with stress in a healthy way in order to minimize experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression.