

Grading Canada’s Mental Health and Substance Use Health Services: Minimal Improvement, Widespread Failures: CAMIMH Poll

Governments Need Immediate Action

- For a second consecutive year, access to mental health and substance use health services received failing or poor grades across Canada.
- Overall, Canada’s mental health grades have seen little change over the past year, with only the governments of British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario improving their rates from ‘F’ to ‘D’, while only Nova Scotians rated access to substance use health services as slightly better than last year (from ‘F’ to ‘D’).

TORONTO, January 14, 2025 – For the second consecutive year, mental health and substance use health services across Canada have received failing grades, highlighting the persistent gaps in access to care and the lack of substantial progress by provincial and federal governments.

According to the latest National Report Card survey from the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH), six of nine provinces and the federal government received a failing grade of **F**, raising alarms about their lack of action, and Canada’s ability to meet the growing demand for mental health and substance use health care services.

“The message is loud and clear, provincial and federal governments are failing Canadians when it comes to ensuring timely access to publicly funded mental health and substance use health services,” said Florence Budden, CAMIMH Co-Chair. “More must be done to ensure that people in need of support for their mental health and substance use health can get the care they need, when they need it.”

Clear gap between Canadians’ expectations and government actions

While British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario have shown slight improvements and received marginally passing grades for mental health (D), the overall picture remains bleak despite the majority of Canadians expressing dissatisfaction and demanding action:

- Nine-in-ten Canadians (90%) consider timely access to mental health care services to be important, with two-thirds (67%) rating it as “very important”– yet there has been no meaningful progress made since last year.
- The majority of Canadians (83%) believe their provincial government must hire more mental health providers to address this gap.
- Moreover, Canadians feel governments are not doing enough to evaluate whether current mental health and substance use health services are working.

CAMIMH MEMBERS

- Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
- Canadian Association of Social Workers
- Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention
- Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association
- Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses
- Canadian Medical Association
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Canadian Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative
- Canadian Psychiatric Association
- Canadian Psychological Association
- Community Addictions Peer Support Association
- Medical Psychotherapy Association of Canada
- National Initiative for Eating Disorders
- National Network for Mental Health
- Psychosocial Rehabilitation Canada
- Schizophrenia Society of Canada
- The College of Family Physicians Canada

Mental health services still get failing grades across Canada

CAMIMH 3rd Annual Report Card – Selected Findings

	Total Score	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NS	NB	NL
Access	F	F	F ↓	F	F	D ↑	F	F	F	F
Public Confidence	D	D	D	D ↑	D	D	D ↑	F	D	F ↓
Satisfaction	F	D ↑	F	F	D ↑	F	F	F	F	F
Effectiveness	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
Total Mental Health Score	F	D ↑	F	F	D ↑	D ↑	F	F	F ↓	F

* Arrows represent the comparison to last year's findings.

Timely access to substance use health services is increasingly important

An estimated 21% of Canada's population will meet the criteria for a substance use disorder or addictions in their lifetime. The report also found that three-quarters (75%) of Canadians believe access to substance use health services is important, with 46% saying this is very important, up slightly from last year's survey.

- A similar proportion (73%) believe it is important for the government to support access to education for the health workforce on substance use health.
- A notable 64% believe access to substance use health services should be on par with access to mental or physical health care, reflecting a growing recognition of the need for parity in care delivery.

“Deeply held, false beliefs about substance use health - stigma - exist within our governments and systems of care. This has led to a dearth of funding and access to care, and a lack of standards across the substance use health sector”, said Anthony Esposti, CAMIMH Co-Chair. “It’s time for governments to accelerate their response to what is important to the people of Canada and invest now to improve outcomes for those looking for help.”

Substance use health services receive poor grades across Canada

CAMIMH 3rd Annual Report Card – Selected Findings

	Total Score	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NS	NB	NL
Access	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D ↑	F ↓	F ↓
Public Confidence	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D ↑	D	F ↓
Satisfaction	D ↑	D ↑	F ↓	F	D	D ↑	D ↑	F	F	F ↓
Effectiveness	F	D ↑	F ↓	F	D ↑	D ↑	F	F	F	F ↓
Total Substance Use Health Score	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D ↑	F ↓	F ↓

* Arrows represent the comparison to last year's findings.

The survey findings reflect Canada’s chronic underfunding of mental health and substance use health services. Provinces allocate only 6% of their total health budget to mental health care—in stark contrast to other G7 nations like France (15%), Germany (11%) and the United Kingdom (9%) and CAMIMH’s call for 12%. There is a clear need for improvement.

The consequences of this systematic underinvestment are devastating:

- Untreated mental illness costs the Canadian economy an estimated \$50 billion annually.
- More than 1 in 2 Canadians struggling with mental health say they are not receiving the help they need.
- Canada continues to face a substance use crisis, with an average of 20 opioid-related deaths occurring each day.

There is no health without mental health and substance use health

The results leave no room for complacency and Canadians have made their priorities clear:

- Governments must increase public investments to improve timely access to effective mental health and substance use health services.
- Hiring more mental health and substance use health providers is essential to address shortages and ensure Canadians get the help they need when they need it.
- Parity between mental health, substance use health and physical health services must be enshrined in federal legislation with targeted funding.

Mental health care is a growing concern for Canadians across all demographics. As the findings reveal, current efforts fall far short of addressing the demand for quality mental health and substance use health care. Without significant action, the gaps in access will continue to impact individuals, families and the economy.

For more details on the results of the Report Card, please visit www.camimh.ca, or follow us on Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn.

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About the survey

The poll was conducted by Mental Health Research Canada and Pollara Strategic Insights with an online sample of 8,211 adult Canadians from October 24th to November 12, 2024. Results from a probability sample of this size could be considered accurate to within ± 1.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Results have been weighted based on age, gender and region to be representative of the Canadian population.

About CAMIMH

Established in 1998, the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) is a member-driven alliance of 17 national mental health organizations comprised of healthcare providers and organizations representing persons with lived and living experience, their families and caregivers. CAMIMH’s mandate is to ensure that mental health and substance use health is placed on the national agenda so that the people of Canada receive timely and appropriate access to care and support.

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