

Survey finds mental health improving for British Columbians but falls short of pre-pandemic levels

British Columbians under 55 more likely to access self-care and mental health support

May 2, 2022, Burnaby B.C. – As restrictions continue to ease across Canada and worldwide, British Columbians are feeling more hopeful than ever since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

New data from Pacific Blue Cross's February BC-based population study on mental health shows 70 per cent reported a positive rating (Excellent/Very Good/Good), 13 per centage points more than last year at the height of the pandemic.

The outlook on mental health is promising as 31 per cent of British Columbians expect improvements in their mental wellbeing over the next few months.

The February 2022 results represent the most positive self-evaluated mental health levels since March 2020. However, there are gaps compared to the pre-pandemic baseline, signaling additional efforts are required in the mental health space.

Those under 55 are scoring low, but willing to seek counselling

According to the survey, individuals younger than 55 years old continue to score lower in self-assessed mental health levels. Only 61 per cent felt positive, whereas 4 in 5 (82%) of those 55 and over indicated contentment.

Pacific Blue Cross's 2021 claims analysis identified that mental health prescription drugs made up 15.9 per cent of the total benefits utilization. 24 per cent of members that are 55 and over made claims in this category while just 13 per cent of those under 55 did so. The overall utilization for mental health paramedical services was 4.8 per cent and 92 per cent of claimants were under the age of 55.

"This data suggests that older people are more likely to seek mental health care through their doctor and prescription medication, while younger people are more often accessing counselling services. Other studies have shown that a mix of counselling and medication is typically the most effective treatment approach for many mental health concerns," commented Maria Watson, Counselling Manager, Canadian Mental Health Association.

Mental health supports and coverage are underused

The survey also found that despite almost two thirds (62 per cent) of respondents being covered under either a group or personal health benefits plan, only 39 per cent had considered using mental health-related services or tools and only 18% had followed through and used them. A lack of knowledge is the primary barrier as more than half of people with employee benefits are not sure if they have access to those services.

"It is important that employers and HR specialists continue to provide employees with adequate education on benefits plans and communicate with clarity and on a regular basis," said Brooke Moss, Associate Vice President, Work & Wellness for Pacific Blue Cross.

Small things help boost mental wellbeing

While most surveyed believe self-care activities are important for maintaining and enhancing mental health, 58 per cent say they are not doing enough exercise. Watson encourages British Columbians to engage in more activities, such as walking, for self-care.

“Many studies tell us that walking, especially in nature, can improve your mood, reduce stress and anxiety, and boost memory and energy,” said Watson.

Pacific Blue Cross recently sponsored the [2022 Vancouver Sun Run's 10K Walk with Pacific Blue Cross](#) to help raise physical and mental health awareness. This annual event is accessible to all members of the community that are looking for ways to practice a little self-care.

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About Pacific Blue Cross

[Pacific Blue Cross](#) is a Health Benefits Society and British Columbia's number one health benefits provider. Based in Burnaby, BC, the not-for-profit organization provides health, dental, life, disability and travel coverage for 1 in 3 British Columbians through group benefits and individual plans. As part of its mission to improve health and wellbeing for British Columbians, Pacific Blue Cross proactively supports charitable organizations across the province working to improve health outcomes.

About This Survey

These results are based on an online survey of a representative sample of 1,003 adult British Columbians surveyed using Leger's panel, LEO, from February 25-27, 2022. As a non-random internet survey, a margin of error is not reported. For comparison, a probability sample of n=1,003 would have a margin of error of ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Any discrepancies between totals are due to rounding.

About Leger

Leger is the largest Canadian-owned market research and analytics company, with more than 600 employees in eight Canadian and US offices. Recently, Leger presented the most accurate polling results for the 2021 Canadian federal election (including the most accurate results in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia) and the 2019 Canadian federal election. This accuracy is due to the quality of the company's LEO panel and its employees' expertise. For more information: leger360.com