

# HR Insights

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## Addressing Mental Health During a Pandemic

With the COVID-19 pandemic in full force, mental health is more important now than ever. In fact, according to a new survey, 81 per cent of Canadians' mental health is negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents most commonly reported increased feelings of anxiety, helplessness and isolation, as well as reduced feelings of optimism. Furthermore, another study found that 67 per cent of Canadians believe that the COVID-19 pandemic will get worse before it gets better.

Employees' mental health is not only important for their overall wellness, but it also plays a big role in how effective they are at work. As such, it's more important than ever to maintain your employees' mental health.

### What Are Canadians Anxious About?

In addition to fears of the disease itself, the pandemic's long-reaching ramifications have people feeling anxious about many different factors at once:

- **Financial stressors**—Fifty-six per cent of Canadians say that their household income has been negatively impacted by the pandemic due to themselves or their partner having hours reduced or eliminated altogether. Additionally, another 10 per cent believe their finances will be impacted in the future.
- **Future uncertainty**—Nobody knows for sure how much longer the pandemic will last, when things will go back to "normal" and what the new "normal" will look like. Furthermore, fears of a second wave mean that many people may continue to have

heightened anxiety even after things begin to settle down.

- **Isolation**—Being isolated for long periods of time can increase feelings of loneliness and helplessness. Many people are no longer able to enjoy their hobbies or the company of loved ones—both of which may have been fundamental to their mental well-being.

### How You Can Help

One of the best ways to address employees' mental health is by offering and encouraging the use of mental health services. HR departments can develop a list of mental health services that can be utilized during the pandemic and share it with employees. They can also help the organization develop policies and practices that enable the use of mental health tools and professionals.

Educating employees on the importance of mental health and providing ideas for how they might be able to manage it without professional assistance (e.g., through meditation and exercise) can also be beneficial. Additionally, focusing on output instead of hours worked can be especially helpful for employees who must care for children or other family members during the traditional workday.

Furthermore, encouraging managers to check in with their teams and plan appropriate social events like virtual happy hours can help reduce feelings of isolation and strengthen teams as a whole.

Contact KRGinsure for more information on the importance of mental health in the workplace.