

Over 40 per cent of BC women do not have access to the mental health support they need during the COVID-19 pandemic

Tuesday, January 26 (Traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations) - Today, new findings released by the [BC Women's Health Foundation](#), in partnership with [Community Savings Credit Union](#), reveals that women's mental health has been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and related public health countermeasures. In BC, nearly **four in ten women** report their mental health has worsened since mid-March 2020. Yet, of the women surveyed*, over **40 per cent** reported not having access to the mental health support they need.

This new research is the second piece in a series called *Unmasking Gender Inequity*, and reveals that the most widespread symptoms of mental health challenges during the pandemic are difficulty sleeping, and feeling nervous or anxious. Health data suggests women were prescribed medications related to anxiety, depression or sleeping support **2.4 times more** than men between April to December 2020. Recent data from the [Women's Health Research Institute](#) of over 6,300 women in BC also reveals that women more commonly described feelings of loneliness, stress and worry during all phases of the pandemic, compared to men.

Genesa M. Greening, President and CEO of the BC Women's Health Foundation, says: "Whether its heightened stress, increased caregiving responsibilities at home, or escalating anxiety, as a single mom, I get it. The pandemic has impacted the mental and physical health of many, yet women are shouldering many of these burdens and their mental health is suffering. In any given week, mental health concerns cost Canada's economy \$50 billion due to Canadians being unable to work. That's why we're advocating for women's specific needs to be holistically considered within all aspects of any pandemic economic recovery plans and beyond."

In terms of demographics, key findings from those surveyed during the pandemic are:

- **Two thirds** of women that are essential workers are experiencing worry, anxiety or stress, and **two in five** are experiencing depression.
- Women's mental health has been heavily impacted by the pandemic: **63% of younger women** (those aged 35 and under) and **37% of women aged over 35** reported feeling worry, anxiety or stress.
- Indigenous women and those from a minority community are more inclined to rate their emotional health poorly (**27 per cent and 35 per cent** more likely respectively) since the beginning of the pandemic.
- Concerns regarding finances and job security has resulted in **nearly half** (44 per cent) of women stating their health has been affected in some way.

Women in British Columbia looking for immediate support for their mental health can view [this open-access resource](#) created by the BC Women's Health Foundation in partnership with a team of researchers from UBC conducting the study, "[Assessing the Mental Health Impacts of COVID-19: A National Survey](#)".

Mike Schilling, President & CEO of Community Savings Credit Union says: “Women’s mental health has been heavily impacted by the pandemic. This is not an issue that women should face alone. As a male ally, I encourage all employers, CEOs and leaders to learn from these findings and take action to better support women’s access to mental health resources.”

Dr. Lori Brotto, Executive Director of the Women’s Health Research Institute and lead investigator on the *COVID-19 Rapid Evidence Study of a Provincial Population Based COhort for GeNder and SEx* (RESPPONSE) study says: “Preliminary data is showing us a pattern of significantly higher rates of depression, anxiety, and loneliness for cis-women, trans folks, and non-binary people since March 2020. Our primary aim is to approach this study with an intersectional lens, examining how psychosocial determinants might be impacting certain demographics more than others. These learnings will ultimately inform how we can best advocate for policy decisions in the coming months.”

To raise awareness of this issue, the BC Women’s Health Foundation in partnership with Community Savings Credit Union is launching a social media campaign today called #AlsoMe to spotlight the common experience many British Columbians are having as it relates to mental health. To join in this campaign, visit the [#AlsoMe webpage here](#) and share the digital asset that resonates most with you.

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Notes to editor:

*These statistics are from the following sources:

- British Columbian data is from a BC Women’s Health Foundation commissioned survey of 1,000 women aged 16 and up collected September 2020 and conducted by Mustel group.
- Additional BC data is from the Women’s Health Research Institute’s [Rapid Evidence Study of a Provincial Population Based COhort for GeNder and SEx](#) (RESPPONSE) study.
- Prescription medication data is from Pacific Blue Cross anonymized paid claims from April - December 2019 and 2020.

About the BC Women’s Health Foundation

BC Women’s Health Foundation is dedicated to advancing the full spectrum of women’s health in BC so that all women, across all life stages, have equitable access to the highest quality healthcare when, where and how they need it. To find out more about our bold and dynamic vision of *healthy women everywhere, capable of anything*, visit bcwomensfoundation.org.

About Community Savings Credit Union

Community Savings Credit Union is committed to financially empowering its members and BC’s communities by providing best-in-class personal and business banking while supporting economic inclusivity. A fully unionized credit union – and the largest provider of banking services in BC to labour unions – Community Savings also has a strong history of advocating for the labour movement to create a better BC for all. Community Savings is a designated Living Wage Employer and an active partner of the Union Protein Project.

Contact:

For more information contact:

Alicia Collyear | BCWHF@yulupr.com | 604-558-1656