

Title: Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Canadian men and women with depressive and anxiety disorders: Time trend data from 9 waves of the iCARE Study

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Background: Few studies examined the psychosocial impacts in those with pre-existing mental health conditions, who are especially vulnerable to uncertainty, social isolation and poor access to care.

Objective: Assess the 2-year multidimensional impacts of the pandemic on men and women with a mental health condition.

Methods: 27,142 Canadians (M_{age} 48.4; SD 16.87) completed nine cross-sectional online surveys (11/2020-09/2022) from the iCARE Study, weighted for age, sex and province. Multivariable logistic regressions adjusted for covariates examined pandemic impacts on mental health, isolation, conflicts, employment, and medical care access as a function of mental health status (depressive/anxiety disorder vs. none). Analyses were repeated by sex. The Cochran-Armitage trend test assessed time trends.

Results: Those with versus without a mental health condition were more likely to report psychological distress [aOR(95% CI) = 3.84-5.57(3.56-6.01)], conflicts [3.39(3.00-3.83)], job loss [2.03(1.82-2.27)], income reduction [1.90(1.73-2.09)], challenges paying for housing [3.12(2.75-3.54)] and food [4.16(3.68-4.72)], and limited access to medical care [2.54(2.32-2.78)]. Impacts on mental health, conflict, job/income decreased overtime (all p's <.001), while difficulty affording food increased (p=0.02). Among those with a mental health condition, women were more like to report increased psychological distress [1.17-1.39(1.05-1.55)], but less likely to report greater conflict [.79(.66-.93)] and job loss [.81(.68-.96)] than men.

Conclusion: Canadians with mental health conditions were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, with more psychological distress among women and more interpersonal conflict and job loss among men.

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