

## Canadian youth – particularly young women – report increased anxiety, depression and stress

### The Prosperity Project tracking poll also shows optimism about job prospects

TORONTO, July 21, 2021 – More than half of Canadian youth, and nearly two-thirds of young women, feel that their anxiety, depression and stress levels are higher now than at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the latest Prosperity Project tracking poll.

Conducted by Pollara Strategic Insights in partnership with The Prosperity Project, the third cross-country survey found 55% of Canadian youth (16-29 years of age) said these negative emotions have increased in the past year – even more so among women (61%) and younger age groups (62% among those aged 16-17, with a third saying their level of anxiety is *much higher* now).

On the positive side, eight-in-ten young Canadians are optimistic about theirs and their family's life returning to normal, with the current rate of vaccination across Canada. And a majority (64%) report having saved money during the pandemic, with a third saving more than usual.

The survey also polled Canadian parents with children aged 17 or younger. In this demographic, anxiety, depression and stress levels remained roughly the same as in January 2021. Similar to the youth respondents, most parents are optimistic about vaccination rates and life returning to normal, and about 60% reported saving money during the pandemic. While a majority are worried about their children's mental health and education, in general parents are optimistic about their children's future.

"The pandemic obviously took a toll on families' mental health, but we are starting to see signs of hope again – especially in job prospects," said Pamela Jeffery, founder of The Prosperity Project, a not-for-profit organization created to ensure Canadian women are not left behind in the COVID-19 recovery. "The challenge now is to make sure that the opportunities are open for everyone."

Other highlights from the poll:

#### Employment Prospects

- About a third of youth reported having their employment plans impacted by the pandemic, with about 23% saying they were unable to find a job and 15% opting not to take a job because of COVID-19.
- While 71% of youth believe they are likely to find the type of job they want when they finish their education, this optimism decreases with age: 81% among 16-17 year olds, 74% among those 18-24, and 61% for those 25-29.
- At least two-fifths among youth are interested in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) sector, with young women showing almost as much interest as men in this sector.
- Among parents, mothers are more likely to say they will work part-time or reduced hours (31%) or quit their job (20%) to care for their children, compared to fathers (22% and 16%, respectively).
- Visible minority women are more likely to quit their job (30%) or work part-time (45%), compared to White women (17% and 27%, respectively).

#### Federal Government

- When choosing the top-most priority for the federal government to focus on, jobs and the economic recovery came out on top for youth (16%) and parents (18%).

- Among youth, top-of-mind issues considered important for the federal government to focus on included health care (50%), affordable housing (47%), making life more affordable (45%) and fighting climate change (45%).
- Childcare was mentioned as an important initiative by 28% of youth respondents. Twice as many young women (35%) as men (17%) consider this a priority for the federal government. Among parents, 34% cited child care an important initiative; mothers gave it much more importance than fathers (42% vs. 25%).
- In terms of voting intentions, youth are much more likely to vote for the NDP (41%), followed by the Liberals (28%), Conservatives (16%) and Green Party (8%). Parents are leaning toward the Liberals (36%), followed by the Conservatives (27%), NDP (22%) and Greens (6%).

“As Canada moves toward recovery from the pandemic, it’s important to understand different viewpoints,” said Pollara Vice-President Lesli Martin. “In some respects young people align with older generations, but in other ways they have a very different outlook. Same for women and visible minorities. We need recovery strategies that embrace all of these perspectives.”

On behalf of the Prosperity Project, Pollara Strategic Insights conducted an online survey among a randomly-selected, reliable sample of 937 youth and 795 parents Canadians from June 3-14, 2021. A probability sample of N=937 carries a margin of error of  $\pm 3.2\%$ , and a sample of N=795 carries a margin of error of  $\pm 3.5\%$ , 19 times out of 20. The youth and parents’ datasets were weighted individually by the most current gender, age and region Census data, ensuring that the youth are a representative proportion of the parent population and vice versa, and to ensure the sample reflects the actual population of youth in Canada and parents of young kids (under 18) in Canada.

This survey is part of The Prosperity Project’s 2021 Canadian Households’ Perspective on the New Economy initiative. Partner organizations in the initiative are Enterprise Canada, CIBC and Pollara Strategic Insights.

Full survey results are available [here](#).

### About The Prosperity Project

Launched in May 2020, The Prosperity Project is a volunteer driven, not-for-profit organization conceived by a diverse group of 62 female leaders from across the country – women who have historically made a difference and are committed to continuing to promote positive change as active participants in The Prosperity Project.

The organization was founded and is being led by Pamela Jeffery, founder of the Women’s Executive Network and Canadian Board Diversity Council. The Prosperity Project is taking action to explicitly link women and prosperity, underscoring the economic importance of gender equality during the COVID-19 recovery. Specific initiatives will include an awareness campaign – modelled on the famous “Rosie the Riveter” campaign from World War II – to promote women’s workforce participation and advancement, an annual report card on gender diversity and leadership and a matching program connecting not-for-profit organizations with business expertise to bolster these organizations’ in-house skills and expertise.

Visit The Prosperity Project website at [www.canadianprosperityproject.ca](http://www.canadianprosperityproject.ca).

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