



Canada Speaks 2012

Mental Health, Addictions and the Roots of Poverty

the **DIGNITY
PROJECT**



overview

For the second year in a row, The Salvation Army, in conjunction with Angus Reid Public Opinion, has conducted polling research to better understand societal perceptions surrounding poverty. This year, we studied opinions about mental illness and addictions.

While previous research has revealed a public which is at times unsympathetic to those living on the streets or in poverty, this new research found that most Canadians are extremely empathetic and compassionate toward those struggling with mental illness and substance addictions. Findings revealed that many Canadians had first or second-hand experience dealing with these issues.

Key findings from our report include:

- **Mental illness and addictions personally touch the lives of four out of five Canadians** with **80 percent** reporting that they have either a friend or family member who has experienced mental illness and/or addiction.
- Most Canadians recognize the **linkage between mental health and addiction** with **71 percent** agreeing that “a lot of people with addictions have mental health problems.”
- **80 percent** of survey respondents reported their belief that **mental illness causes many Canadians to experience poverty**.



Also:

- **87 percent** of respondents believe that **mental illness should be a higher priority for the government.**
- **82 percent** of those surveyed think that there **should be more services to help people with addictions.**
- **73 percent** agree that there would be **far fewer homeless people** in Canada if there was **better care for people with mental health problems.**
- **Nearly 100 percent of Canadians** agree that people with mental health problems **deserve to live a life of dignity.**

These findings are promising and reveal a population that recognizes the barriers and obstacles inhibiting Canadians that suffer from either mental illness or addiction. They are asking the government to prioritize these issues by providing assistance to get those impacted back on their feet. Across the country, The Salvation Army offers innovative programs and services to assist those living with mental illness and addiction. From long-term care for mental health patients to a pilot day program addressing the root cause of addiction, the Army is working tirelessly to show by example that everyone, regardless of circumstance, deserves dignity.



Canadians understand and can relate to the daily struggles that those with mental illness and addictions encounter.

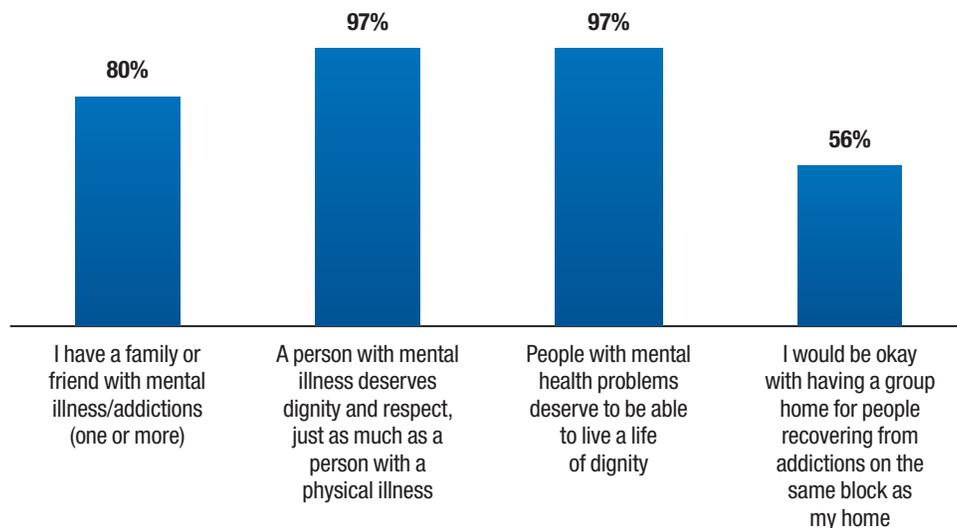
Many Canadians have been impacted by the harsh grip of addiction and the hardships faced when living with a mental illness. By and large, the public empathizes with those that suffer from either of these conditions.

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), approximately “one in every five Canadian adults under age 65 will have a mental health problem in any given year” and a 2003 survey from Statistics Canada reported that, “One in 10 Canadians 15 years of age and over report symptoms consistent with alcohol or illicit drug dependence.” These two groups make up a large portion of the Canadian population, making it all the more important that individuals understand the day-to-day realities they face.

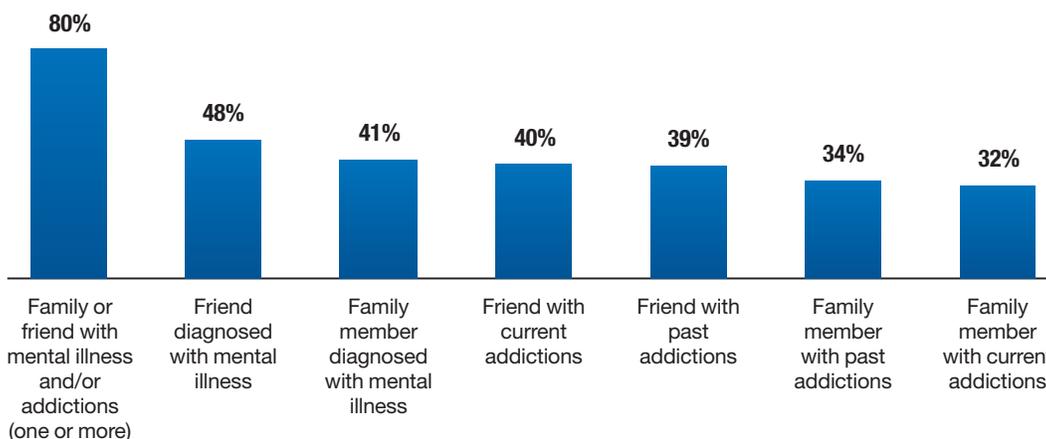
Findings from our report revealed that many Canadians can empathize, with 80 percent reporting that they have either a friend or family member who has experienced mental illness and/or addiction. This finding demonstrates there is a wide community of people who can understand and possibly even help facilitate care and recovery.

Canadians are sympathetic to those facing mental illness and addictions with our findings revealing that:

- **80 percent** of respondents reported that they **have a family member or friend with mental illness and/or addiction**.
- On average, Canadians estimate **25 percent of the population is living with mental illness**, close to the one in five figure reported by the Canadian Mental Health Association.
- Canadians estimated that **28 percent of the population is living with an addiction to drugs or alcohol**, more than the one in 10 Canadians reported by Statistics Canada.
- **97 percent of respondents** believe that a person with mental illness **deserves dignity and respect**, just as much as a person with a physical illness.
- Almost **100 percent** of respondents **reported that people with mental health problems deserve to live a life of dignity**.
- Almost **60 percent** of respondents said they **would be okay having a group home for people recovering from addictions** on the same block as their home.



A large majority of Canadians have had personal experience with an individual suffering from either mental illness or addiction, making them more prone to recognizing that they, like everyone, deserve dignity and respect.



“We all deserve dignity and respect, and the challenge is that you and me have a lot easier time getting our voice heard. It’s very difficult for people who are dealing with some of these challenges to even be heard. So we have to make an extra effort to be sure that we’re listening and they have somewhere to go to be heard.”

— Captain W. Mark Stanley, Executive Director, Addictions and Residential Centre, Edmonton, Alberta



Canadians recognize the link between mental illness, addiction and poverty.

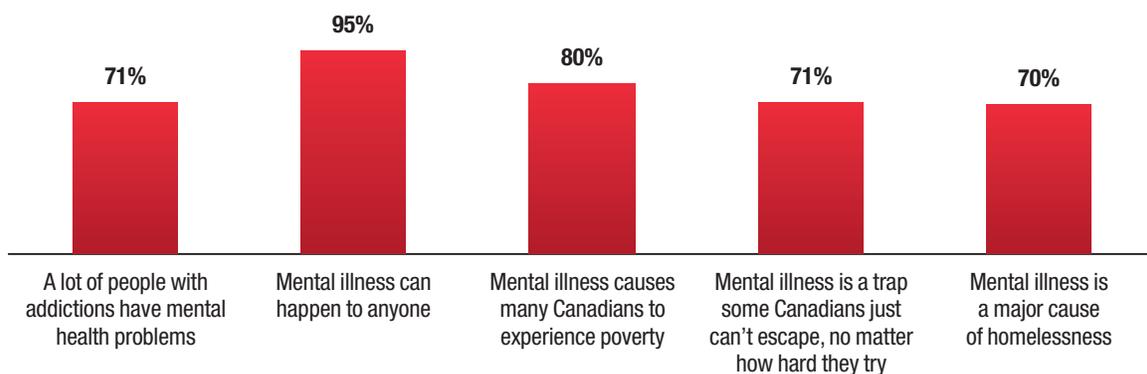
Many times, individuals living in poverty are battling not only one obstacle, but are also trying to overcome multiple barriers including mental illness and addiction. According to a 2008 report from the Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, “about 20 percent of people with a mental disorder have a co-occurring substance use problem.” While it can be difficult to determine what came first, the addiction or mental illness, these individuals are fighting an uphill battle, which most could not even begin to comprehend.

A large majority of Canadians, 80 percent, recognize that struggles with mental illness can result in a life of poverty. Dealing with mental illness and addiction is a constant struggle for those impacted, and when not treated effectively can lead to the inability to hold employment and maintain stable housing.

Social service programs, like those offered by The Salvation Army, provide a sense of stability to clients in need, while giving them the necessary tools to get back on their feet and reintegrate into society.

Additional key findings that recognize the link between mental illness, addiction and poverty include:

- **71 percent** of Canadians agree that a lot of **people with addictions have mental health problems.**
- **95 percent** believe that **mental illness can happen to anyone.**
- **80 percent of Canadians** think that **mental illness causes many Canadians to experience poverty.**
- **More than 70 percent** feel that mental illness is a trap that some Canadians just can't escape, no matter how hard they try.
- **70 percent** of respondents believe that mental illness is a major cause of homelessness.



“There’s a huge link between homelessness, mental health and addiction issues. It’s a barrier for many of them to get work, to secure a comfortable place to live and obviously there’s a stigma attached.”

— David Woodland, Divisional Social Services Secretary, British Columbia Division



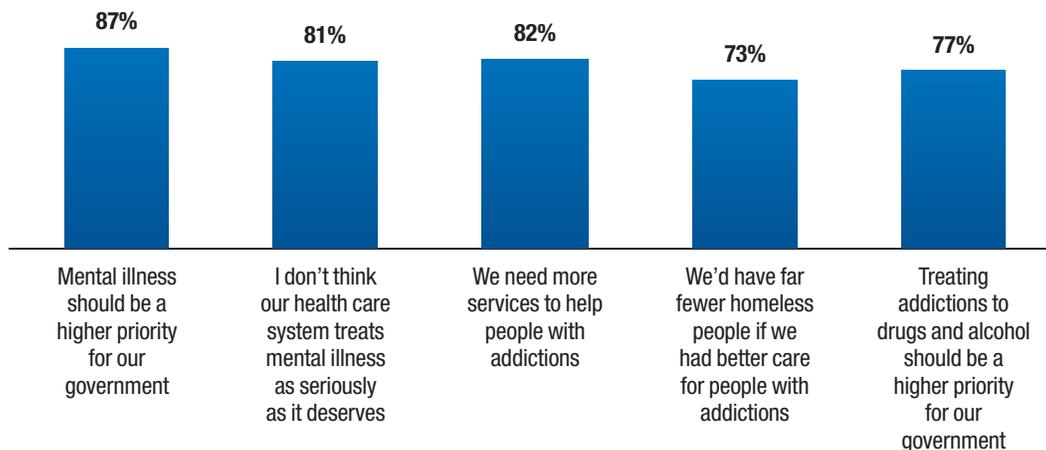
Most Canadians agree there is more that can be done by the government and social service programs regarding mental health and addiction.

Not only do Canadians empathize with the hardships encountered by individuals suffering from mental illness or addictions, but they also believe that more can be done by the government to provide assistance. A large majority of respondents saw a correlation between the lack of government support for individuals with addiction and the nation's homelessness problem and believe that the health care system in Canada does not treat mental illness as necessary.

While there are many important issues affecting Canadians right now, too often, the subject of mental illness and addiction is not prioritized and pushed to the back burner. The time has come to address these topics, and develop a more effective way to assist those living with both mental illness and addiction.

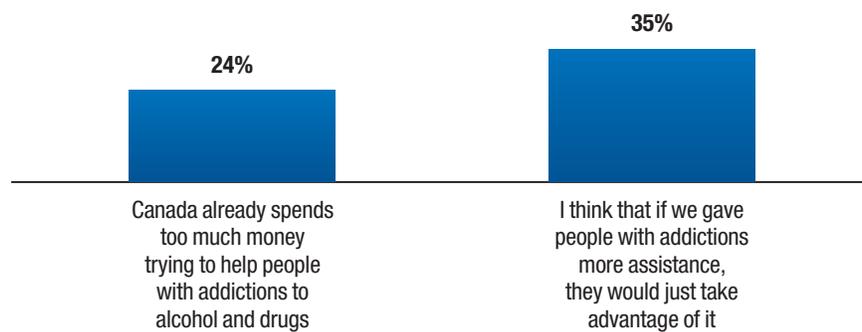
Below are additional key findings from our report:

- **Almost 90 percent** of respondents agree that mental illness should be a higher priority for our government.
- **81 percent** feel that our health care system doesn't treat mental illness as seriously as it deserves.
- **More than 80 percent** of our survey respondents believe that there needs to be more services to help people with addictions.
- **73 percent** think that we'd have far fewer homeless people if we had better care for people with addictions.
- **Almost 80 percent** feel that treating addictions to drugs and alcohol should be a higher priority for our government.



Despite these findings, there is a significant minority who oppose providing any additional assistance:

- **Almost a quarter of respondents** think that Canada already **spends too much money trying to help people with addictions** to alcohol and drugs.
- **35 percent** feel that if we gave people with addictions more assistance, they would just **take advantage of it**.



Across Canada, The Salvation Army operates programs and services to assist those living with mental illness and addiction while treating each individual with dignity. Staff members are trained to provide proper care to individuals, including rehabilitation programs and counselling sessions. Whether the client is with the Army for a week, a month or a year, they are always treated with the utmost care, respect and dignity.

“*When people come to our programs, they are coming from some of the deepest darkest days of their lives, and they’re desperate to move on and get beyond their addiction.*”

— David Woodland, Divisional Social Services Secretary, British Columbia Division



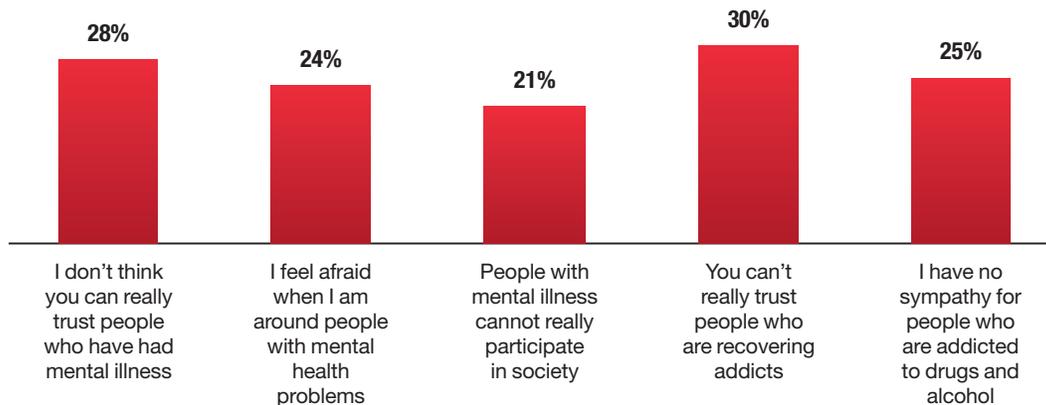
Misconceptions still remain about those living with addictions and mental illness.

Despite some positive findings about Canadians' attitudes toward those suffering from mental illness and addictions, many misconceptions still exist. In fact, a significant minority of the population reported being afraid of those living with mental illness and not having any sympathy for individuals addicted to drugs and alcohol.

In the 130 years that The Salvation Army has been operating in Canada, the Army has continued to fight stereotypes and misconceptions about those living in poverty. Most often these individuals are just like you and me, trying to survive under extremely difficult circumstances.

Additional misconceptions include:

- **More than a quarter of respondents** don't think you can really trust people who have had mental illness.
- **24 percent of Canadians are afraid** when they are around people they know who have **mental health problems**.
- **More than 20 percent** reported that people with **mental illness cannot really participate in society**.
- **30 percent say that you can't really trust people who are recovering addicts**.
- A quarter of respondents say that have **no sympathy for people who are addicted to drugs and alcohol**.



In order for those living with addiction and mental illness to be treated with dignity and respect, these false impressions need to be remedied.

Today, approximately three million Canadians live in poverty with many of them suffering from either mental illness or addiction. The Salvation Army serves 1.7 million people across the country every year with basic needs thanks to generous donors.

In honour of May being Dignity month, The Salvation Army is not only calling on Canadians to dig deep and donate, but to continue to encourage open discussion around societal issues such as mental illness and addictions.

By inspiring further discussion you are opening your understanding, enhancing your capacity for empathy and advocating for justice and equality.

“*The common misperception (of people with addictions) is that they don't want to change, that it's their fault, that they're like this now and they'll be like this forever. I think that people don't see the pain and suffering that these men have. There are reasons why they've turned to substances to cope with life.*”

— Dorothee Ballardur, Addictions Program Director, Centre Booth de Montréal

survey methodology

This study was conducted online with a sample of 1,011 Canadians drawn from the Angus Reid Public Opinion – a panel of 100,000+ Canadians who have agreed to participate in research.

This panel, which has won awards for its exemplary quality, is balanced to be representative of the Canadian population.

The survey was conducted February 23 and 24, 2012, in both English and French. The data was weighted by age, gender, region, language, and past federal vote, to ensure final representativeness.

With a sample of this size, the data can be considered accurate approximately +/- 3.1 percent, 19 times out of 20.

The Dignity Project is designed to educate the public about the reality of poverty in the 21st century – and underscore the point that everyone deserves basic human dignity.

Today, approximately three million Canadians, or one in 11 people, live in poverty. The Salvation Army recognizes that poverty is a critical issue, and that everyone has a right to access basic necessities such as nutritious food, health care, education and economic opportunity.

More than 1.7 million people receive assistance from The Salvation Army each year across the country – many among the nation's poor.

the **DIGNITY PROJECT**
SalvationArmy.ca/dignity



The Salvation Army is an international Christian organization that began its work in Canada in 1882 and has grown to become the largest non-governmental direct provider of social services in the country. The Salvation Army gives hope and support to vulnerable people today and everyday in 400 communities across Canada and more than 120 countries around the world.

The Salvation Army offers practical assistance for children and families, often tending to the basic necessities of life, providing shelter for homeless people and rehabilitation for people who have lost control of their lives to an addiction. When you give to The Salvation Army, you are investing in the future of marginalized and overlooked people in your community.

News releases, articles and updated information can be found at
www.SalvationArmy.ca