



A Generation Under Pressure: Economic and Employment Challenges on Youth Mental Health

- Study Results



Study conducted in partnership with



November | 2025

Methodology



Study design: In partnership with GreenShield, Mental Health Research Canada deployed a national one-time survey to understand generational experiences in Canada focused on the topic areas of the current political and economic climate, the workforce and mental health indicators.

Data collection: The survey was deployed to 2,745 Canadians aged 16 and older from September 11-21, 2025. Of these, 2,213 were youth ages 16 to 29 (including 200 under 18 years old), and 532 were adults aged 30 and over. A random sample of panelists were invited to complete the survey from a set of partner panels based on the Lucid exchange platform. These partners are typically double opt-in survey panels, blended to manage out potential skews in the data from a single source. The survey results have a margin of error of +/- 1.87, 19 times out of 20. The data was weighted by age, gender, education and region to ensure representativeness. Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

National and global events: The survey was conducted during a period characterized by seasonal activities (e.g., the new school year was underway) alongside ongoing economic, geopolitical and environmental developments. Following a season where many Canadians were engaged in summer activities, public discussions continued around economic conditions and international conflicts including tariff and trade disputes. Within Canada, heatwaves and wildfires were also present. The mixed context of temporary relief and persistent stress provides important background for interpreting the population's mental health responses.

Report Context

Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC) has conducted a series of national studies revealing an alarming state of youth mental health in Canada. The research seeks to inform governments, policymakers and service providers about the urgent needs of young Canadians. The findings are deeply troubling as revealed in our landmark report, [A Generation at Risk: The State of Youth Mental Health in Canada](#), where the research revealed an estimated **1.25 million of Canada's 4.6 million youth require mental health support each year**. These are not just statistics – they reflect the lived experiences of many Canadian youth navigating a fragmented, hard-to-access mental health system. Marginalized youth are disproportionately affected, often struggling not only with mental health issues themselves but also with barriers to care that fail to reflect their realities such as their culture, sexual identity and race.

In a recent national [OMNI study](#), MHRC surveyed 1,500 Canadians to explore the link between mental health and the growing economic and political uncertainty faced nationally and across the globe. **Forty-two percent of Canadians reported a rise in anxiety levels with younger Canadians more likely to be affected by personal challenges due to the economic uncertainty**. This generation is facing an increasing number of external factors impacting their mental health coupled with the pre-existing mental health challenges that youth are reporting.

This new study further investigated what specific factors are impacting youth mental health. The state of the world and of the economy are resulting in youth reporting increased rates of anxiety for reasons including job insecurity and lack of hope for their financial future. **Now is the time to invest in comprehensive, youth-centred mental health strategies and supports that address both the social and economic realities shaping their mental health and well-being.**

“I expect there would be a website or support that would tell you where to go for mental health support. Is there? I do not know.”

Male, Quebec, 17 years old

Report Context (cont'd)

What does this mean? That there is a larger need for mental health supports for youth.

Why are youth not accessing the support they need when they need it most? The answer is systemic barriers. Youth report that the leading barriers to accessing care are cost (52%), long wait times (45%) and difficulty finding the right support (41%). Finding the right support is even more important for racialized youth as they identify a lack of culturally relevant supports (24%) as a major barrier to accessing the care they need.

The mental health crisis for youth continues to intensify as external factors impact the state of youth mental health. **This is a clear call to action for all interest groups to bridge the gap between need and support. Youth are calling for more affordable care, better system navigation and supports that are culturally relevant.**

New Study Results: More than a quarter (27%) of youth currently indicate that they need mental health support, compared to just 17% of those over the age of 30

New Study Results: Youth are more than twice as likely (15%) than Canadians over 30 (7%) to describe their mental health as “poor” or “very poor”. That number jumps to 20% among newcomers to Canada, 22% among underemployed youth and 33% among 2SLGBTQ+ youth. MHRC’s research continues to validate these findings while economic and employment conditions are accelerating these mental health outcomes. ²

Key New Findings

Economic pressures and job insecurity are accelerating the youth mental health crisis – especially among equity-deserving groups

- 82% of Canadian youth **feel stressed and anxious about the future of their career** compared to 50% of those aged 30 and older.
 - Among racialized and 2SLGBTQI+ youth, those numbers increase to 85% and 90%.
 - The top two concerns driving worsening mental health indicators among youth is the inability to cover basic living expenses (48%) and not being able to find a stable job (34%).
- 30% of Canadian youth say a **difficult job market is contributing to negative mental health**, double the rate felt by those over 30 years old.
 - These trends are heightened among racialized youth (36%) and 2SLGBTQI+ youth (40%).



Key New Findings (cont'd)

- Three quarters (76%) of youth believe that no matter how hard they work, **bigger forces out of their control will influence their financial future.**



- 67% of youth say that living through so many financial crises has left them with long-term anxiety about financial security compared to 55% of those aged 30 and older.

- **Only 1 in 5 Canadian youth (21%) say they feel financially secure,** and 41% spend half or more of their income on basic necessities.



- Among underemployed youth, only 11% feel financially secure and 47% spend more than half of their income on basic needs.
- Among 2SLGBTQI+ youth, only 13% say they feel financially secure and 57% spend more than half of their income on basics needs.

- **When Canadian youth consider the life they aspire to have more broadly, the biggest factors they see standing in their way include** the cost of living (70%), mental health challenges (41%), limited career options (38%), a shrinking job market (35%), personal debt (32%), social isolation (31%), and climate change (22%).

Key New Findings (cont'd)

There is a significant need for improved access to care.

Leading barriers: cost, system navigation and lack of culturally appropriate care

- Youth identified cost (52%) as the leading barrier to accessing care, followed by long wait times (45%) and challenges finding the right support (41%). According to MHRC's mixed-method study, these barriers appear to persist in part due to limited efforts to fully understand and address the underlying factors that prevent youth from accessing care. ²
- Almost a quarter (24%) of racialized youth identify a lack of culturally relevant supports as a barrier to accessing the care they need.

“Money is a huge barrier. My first therapy was out-of-pocket. But I lived at home then, so it was OK, I could afford it. But I live on my own now. I make \$70,000 a year and I just can’t afford to pay for this. I have no idea how someone making less would manage.”

Male, Ontario, 26 years old ²



Demographic Snapshot:
Regional
Gender
2SLGBTQI+

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Regional Insights

Ontario

- 85% of Ontario youth feel anxious about their short-term financial future – the highest of any province in Canada.

Atlantic Canada

- Only 47% of Atlantic youth have accessed the mental health support they need — the lowest rate nationally.
- More than one in four Atlantic youth (22%) feel negative or very negative about their career future — the most pessimistic in Canada.

Quebec

- Compared to 82% of Canadian youth report feeling stressed and anxious about their future, young Quebecers stand out — with only 78% saying they feel this way and only 11% reporting their mental health as poor, both the lowest levels in the country.
- 67% of Quebec youth worry about their short-term financial future, and 60% report negative mental health impacts from work; so, more supports are needed.

British Columbia

- 83% of BC youth say their employment or unemployment situation is negatively impacting their mental health – well above Canada's youth population at 75%.
- 1 in 5 BC youth reports their mental health is poor or very poor, compared to just 14% of the general youth population.

Alberta

- 82% of Alberta youth report negative mental health impacts from employment or unemployment, compared to 75% of all youth.
- 63% of Alberta youth agree they're working the number of hours they'd like — the lowest satisfaction level in the country.

MB/SK

- When asked if they feel stressed or anxious about the future of their career, SK/MB youth were the most likely to respond "Always" (31%), compared to 25% of all youth.

Gender Insights

Women are much more likely to say financial strain is affecting their mental health, specifically when it comes to:

Paying bills: 51% of women vs. 41% of men

Affordability of essentials: 49% of women vs. 36% of men

- **33% of women** say they're struggling financially, compared to **24% of men**
- **32% of young women** say they feel anxious about the future, compared to **20% of young men.**
- Only **16% of women** feel financially stable vs **26% of men**

2SLGBTQI+ Insights

2SLGBTQI+ youth report the highest rates of poor mental health of any group, with **1 in 3** rating their mental health as poor or very poor, compared to **15% of all youth**

- **85%** say their employment or unemployment is negatively affecting their mental health (**vs. 75% of youth overall**)
- **Only 13%** feel financially secure, while **44%** say they're struggling to keep up with bills (youth average: 28%)
- **Nearly 1 in 4** spend 70% or more of their income on basic expenses — **almost double** the rate among all youth
- **47% say** they have access to online mental health resources, compared to **54% of all youth**



Survey Results

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Which of the following best describes your current mental health?

DEMOGRAPHICS	VERY GOOD	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	VERY POOR
Youth Population (16-29)	21%	33%	31%	10%	5%
Older Population (30+)	27%	41%	25%	5%	2%
Youth Population Breakdown (16-29):					
Racialized person (Black, Indigenous, Person of Colour, etc.)	18%	31%	35%	10%	5%
2SLGBTQIA+	11%	23%	33%	22%	11%
Underemployed	13%	27%	38%	14%	8%
Unemployed (Not Retired)	19%	29%	34%	10%	6%
Employed	22%	36%	29%	9%	4%
Newcomer	23%	36%	30%	7%	3%

Do you currently feel you need support for your mental health?

DEMOGRAPHICS

	YES, I CURRENTLY NEED SUPPORT	NO, BUT I HAVE NEEDED SUPPORT IN THE PAST	NO, I HAVE NEVER NEEDED SUPPORT
Youth Population (16-29)	27%	37%	30%
Older Population (30+)	18%	26%	52%
Youth Population Breakdown (16-29):			
Racialized person (Black, Indigenous, Person of Colour, etc.)	30%	36%	29%
2SLGBTQIA+	44%	41%	10%
Underemployed	29%	36%	29%
Unemployed (Not Retired)	28%	34%	30%
Employed	27%	39%	30%

Have you been able to access the mental health support you need?

DEMOGRAPHICS

	YES, I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS THE SUPPORT I NEED	NO, I'VE TRIED TO ACCESS CARE BUT ENCOUNTERED BARRIERS	NO, I NEED HELP BUT HAVE NOT TRIED TO ACCESS CARE
Youth Population (16-29)	56%	30%	10%
Older Population (30+)	61%	20%	14%
Youth Population Breakdown (16-29):			
Racialized person (Black, Indigenous, Person of Colour, etc.)	57%	28%	11%
2SLGBTQIA+	46%	43%	8%
Underemployed	48%	35%	12%
Unemployed (Not Retired)	51%	33%	10%
Employed	58%	29%	9%

[Base Youth Population: n = 1,417] [Older Population: n = 532]

What barriers are preventing you from accessing mental health support?

DEMOGRAPHICS	HIGH COST	LONG WAIT TIMES	IT'S HARD TO FIND THE RIGHT SUPPORT	UNSURE WHERE TO START	UNSURE WHAT SUPPORT I NEED	FEAR OF JUDGEMENT/ STIGMA	LIMITED LOCAL ACCESS	LACK OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT SUPPORTS
Youth Population (16-29)	52%	45%	41%	32%	32%	29%	29%	17%
Older Population (30+)	50%	46%	36%	34%	22%	18%	17%	14%
Youth Population Breakdown (16-29):								
Racialized person (Black, Indigenous, Person of Colour, etc.)	53%	45%	46%	35%	29%	28%	24%	24%
2SLGBTQIA+	69%	57%	53%	31%	35%	35%	34%	11%
Underemployed	54%	51%	42%	35%	34%	29%	30%	14%
Unemployed (Not Retired)	50%	36%	41%	36%	43%	33%	27%	17%
Employed	54%	51%	41%	30%	26%	27%	29%	17%

Which of the following features would you value in a mental health support or care solution?

DEMOGRAPHICS	AFFORDABLE/ LOW COST	ON-DEMAND ACCESS	EASY TO NAVIGATE	SHORT TO NO WAIT TIMES	DIGITAL OPTION	CULTURALLY RELEVANT SUPPORT
Youth Population (16-29)	55%	48%	47%	42%	36%	30%
Older Population (30+)	54%	48%	38%	47%	26%	29%
Youth Population Breakdown (16-29):						
Racialized person (Black, Indigenous, Person of Colour, etc.)	57%	49%	49%	41%	37%	38%
2SLGBTQIA+	72%	57%	54%	52%	41%	45%
Underemployed	58%	47%	43%	42%	35%	32%
Unemployed (Not Retired)	53%	49%	47%	42%	36%	33%
Employed	56%	47%	46%	42%	36%	29%

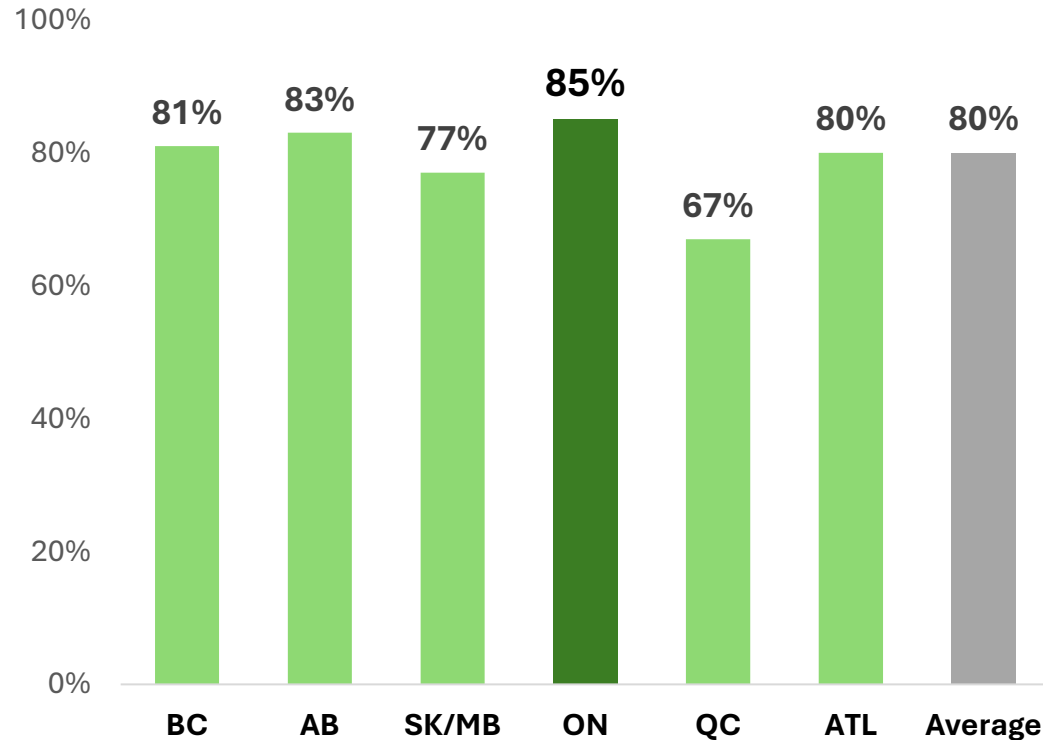
Do you feel stressed or anxious about the future of your employment or career?

DEMOGRAPHICS	ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER
Youth Population (16-29)	25%	57%	12%	5%
Older Population (30+)	15%	35%	20%	30%
Youth Population Breakdown (16-29):				
Racialized person (Black, Indigenous, Person of Colour, etc.)	29%	56%	11%	4%
2SLGBTQIA+	38%	52%	8%	3%
Underemployed	31%	58%	9%	3%
Unemployed (Not Retired)	31%	53%	11%	5%
Employed	22%	60%	13%	5%

[Base Youth Population: n = 2,213][Older Population: n = 532]

Regional Insights – Ontario

Concerns For Short-Term Financial Future



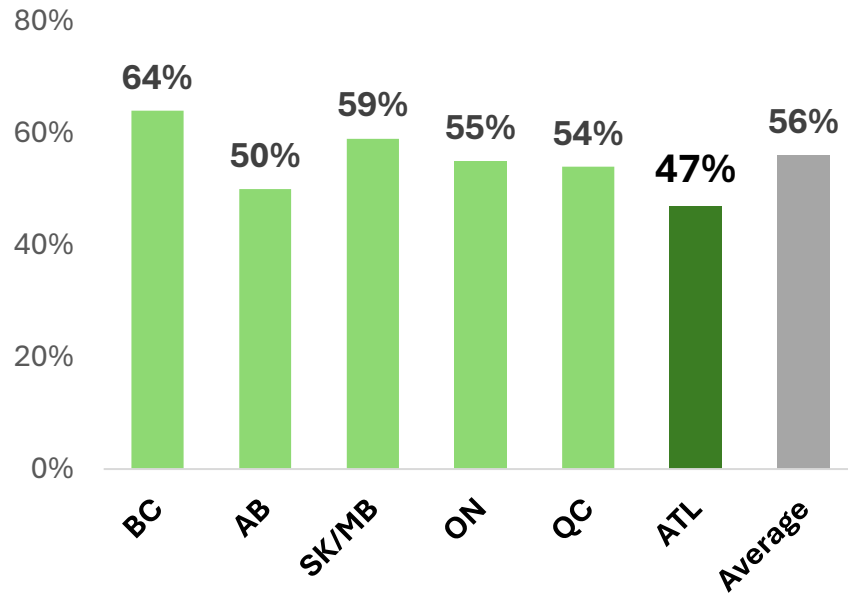
- **85% of Ontario youth feel anxious about their short-term financial future – the highest of any province in Canada.**

Base n = 2213

Participants who selected *Definitely* or *Somewhat* to “Growing concerned about your short-term financial future because of your current employment/unemployment situation”

Regional Insights – Atlantic Canada

Accessed Mental Health Support

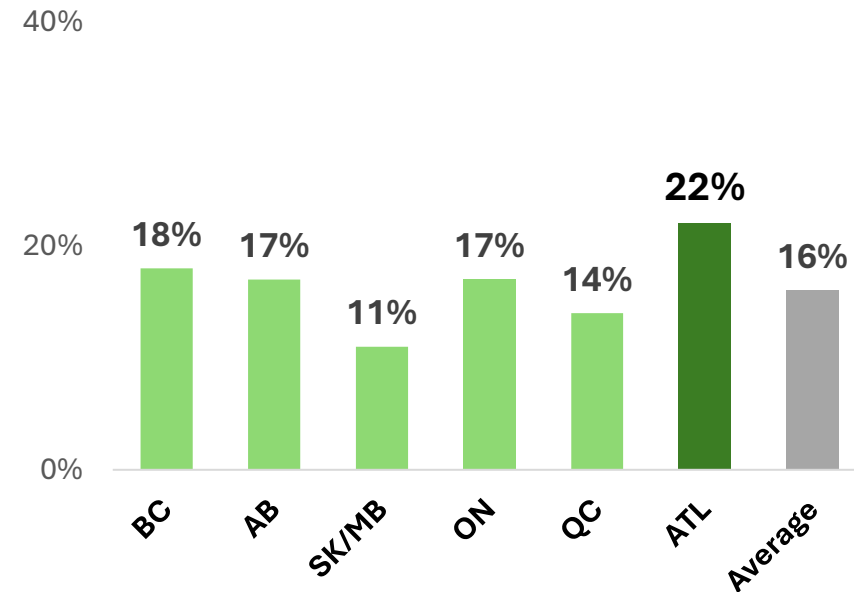


Only 47% of Atlantic youth have accessed the mental health support they need — the lowest rate nationally.

n = 1417

Participants who selected *Yes, I have been able to access the support I need* to “Have you been able to access the mental health support you need?”

Negative Outlook on Career Future



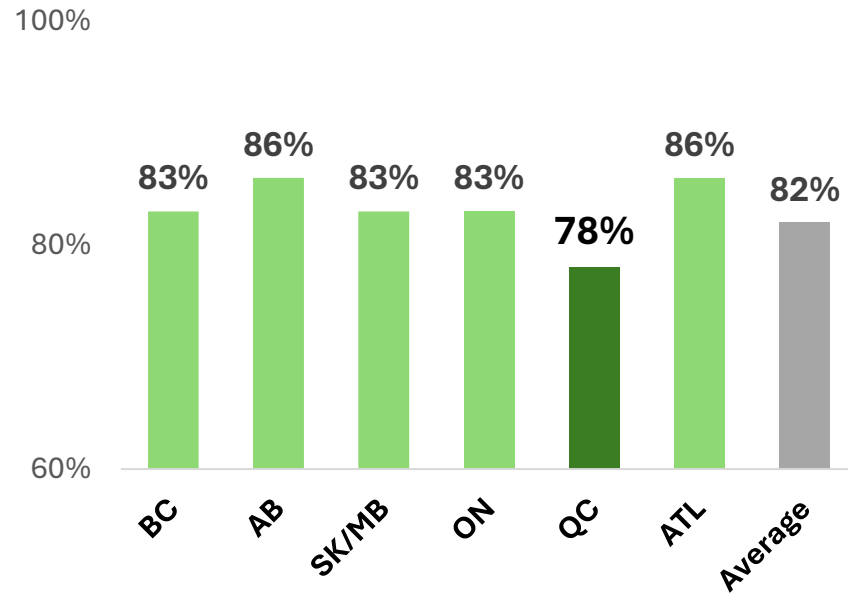
More than one in four Atlantic youth (22%) feel negative or very negative about their career future — the most pessimistic in Canada.

Base n = 2213

Participants who selected *Poor* or *Very Poor* to Overall, how would you describe how you feel right now about your employment and career future?

Regional Insights – Quebec

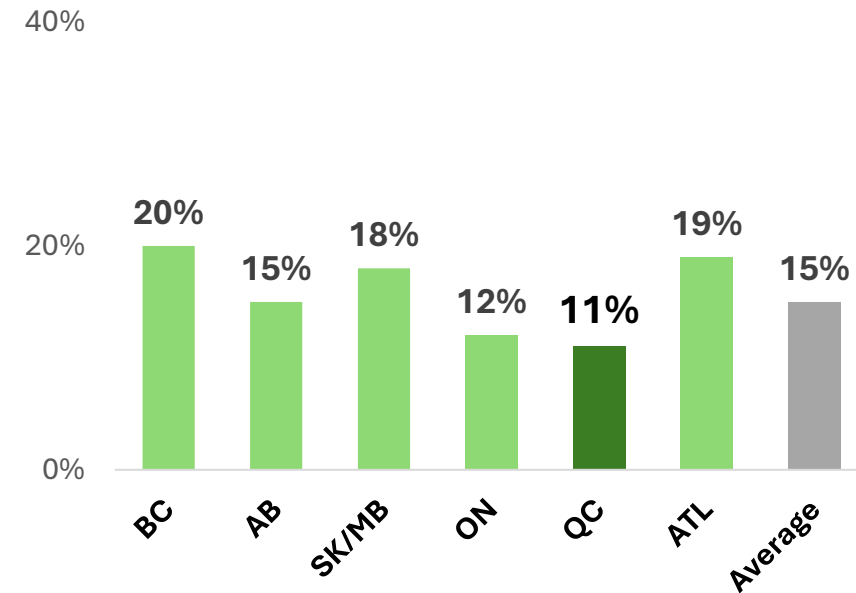
Stressed/Anxious about Career Future



n = 2213

Participants who selected *Always* or *Sometimes* to “Do you feel stressed or anxious about the future of your employment or career...?”

Poor Mental Health



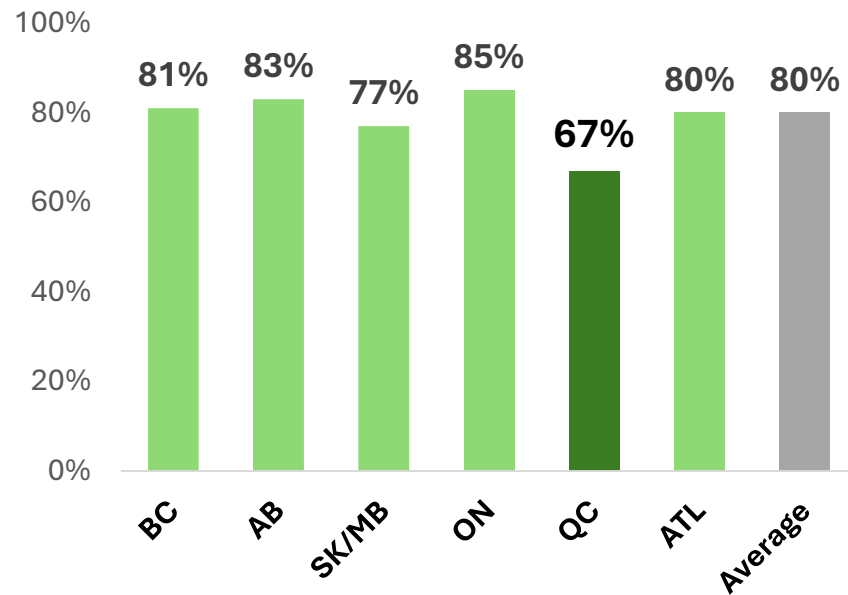
n = 2213

Participants who selected *Poor* or *Very Poor* to “Which of the following best describes your current mental health?”

Compared to 82% of Canadian youth who report feeling **stressed and anxious** about their future, young **Quebeckers stand out — with only 78% saying they feel this way** and only **11% reporting their mental health as poor**, both the lowest levels in the country.

Regional Insights – Quebec

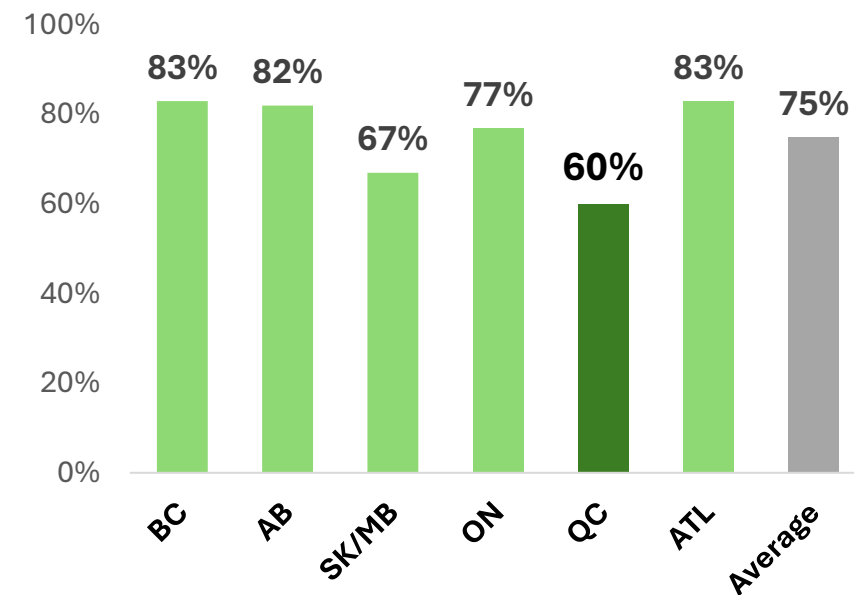
Concerns about Short-Term Financial Future



n = 2213

Participants who selected *Definitely* or *Somewhat* to “Growing concerned about your short-term financial future because of your current employment/unemployment situation”

Negative Mental Health Impacts – Unemployment/Employment Situation



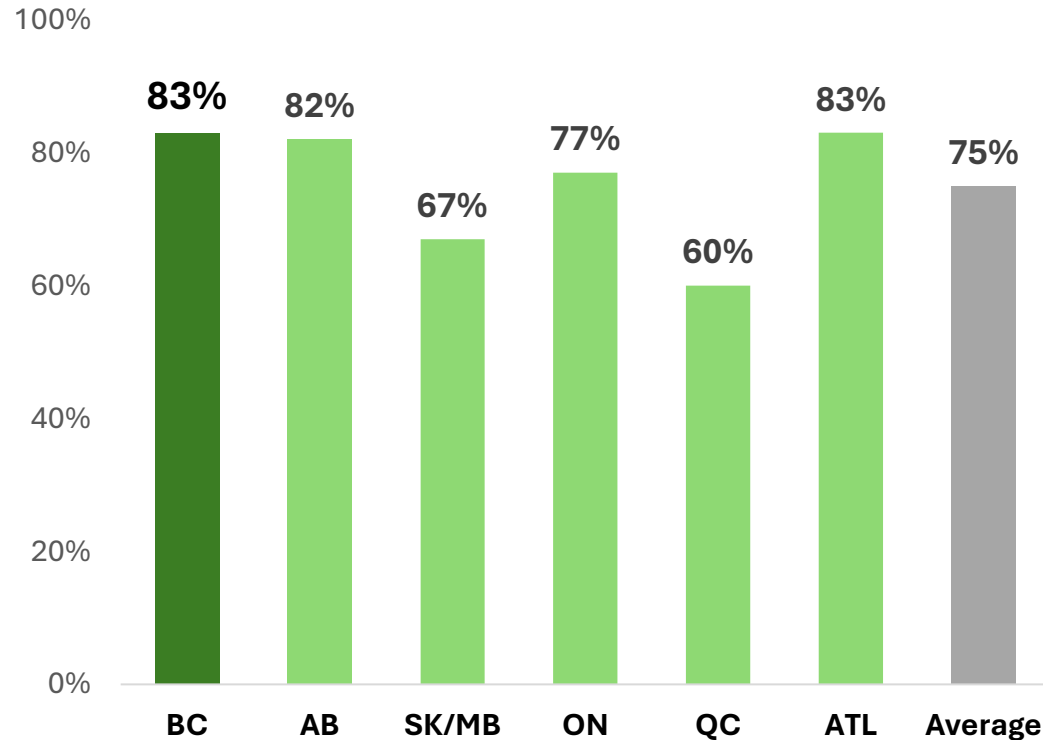
n = 2213

Participants who selected *Definitely* or *Somewhat* to “Feeling negative impacts to your mental health because of your current employment/ unemployment situation”

Still, **67%** of Quebec youth worry about their short-term financial future, and **60%** report negative mental health impacts from work; so, more supports are needed.

Regional Insights – British Columbia

Negative Mental Health Impacts – Unemployment/Employment Situation



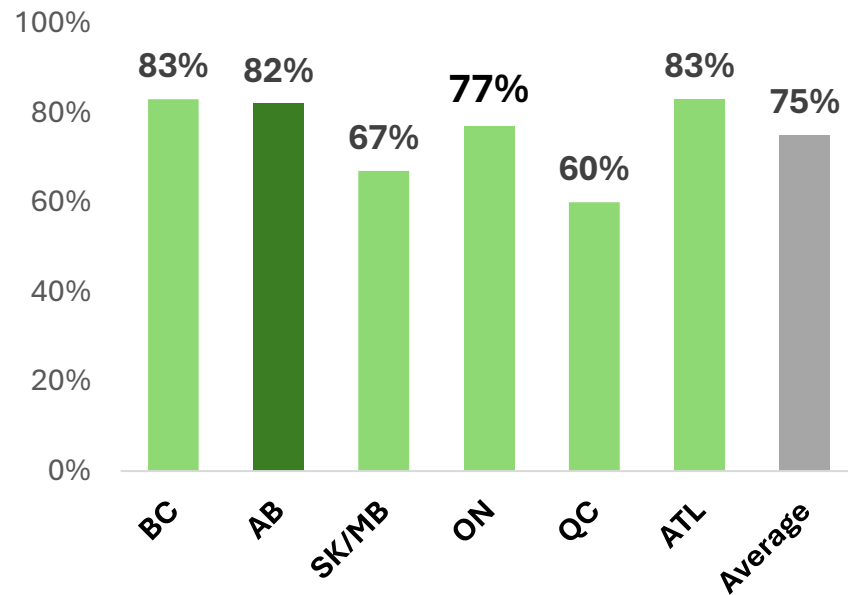
- **83% of BC youth say their employment or unemployment situation is negatively impacting their mental health – well above Canada’s youth population at 75%.**

n = 2213

Participants who selected *Definitely* or *Somewhat* to “Growing concerned about your short-term financial future because of your current employment/unemployment situation”

Regional Insights – Alberta

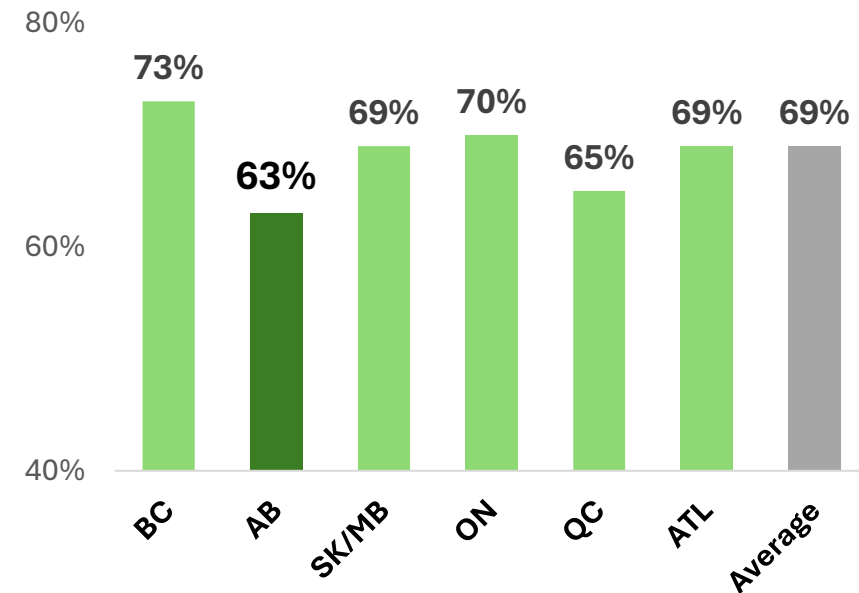
Negative Mental Health Impacts – Unemployment/Employment Situation



n = 2213

Participants who selected *Definitely* or *Somewhat* to “Feeling negative impacts to your mental health because of your current employment/unemployment situation”

Working Preferred Number of Hours



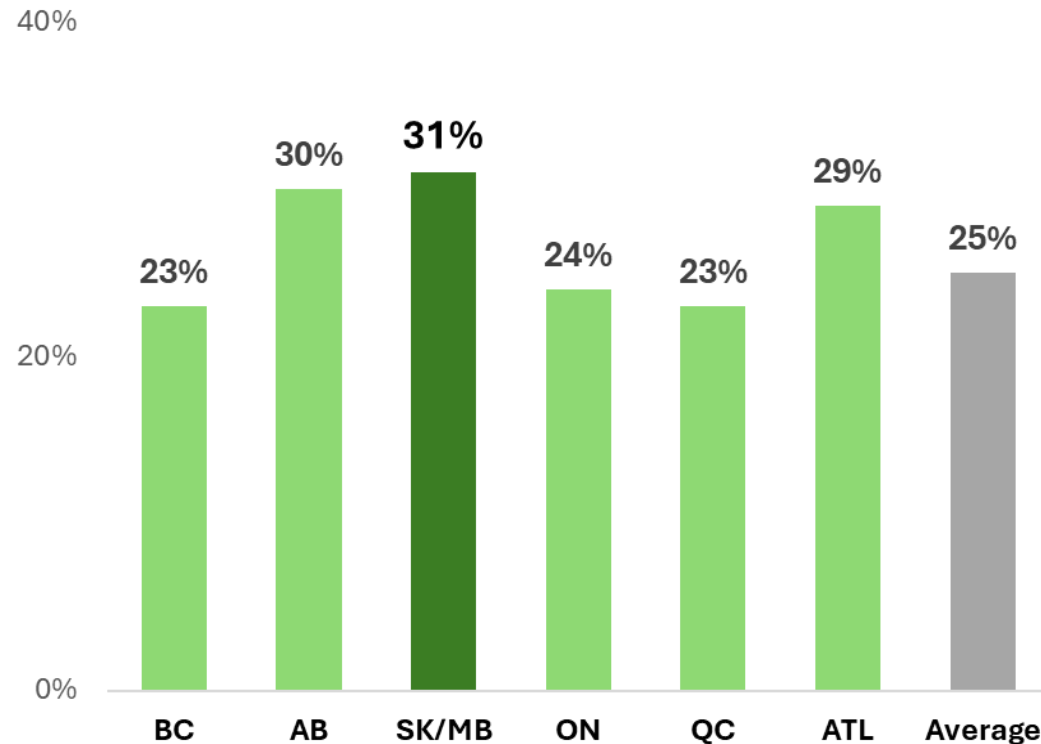
n = 2213

Participants who selected *Strongly Agree* or *Somewhat Agree* to “I am working the number of hours I would like”

82% of Alberta youth report negative mental health impacts from employment or unemployment, compared to 75% of all youth. **63%** of Alberta youth agree they’re working the number of hours they’d like — the lowest satisfaction level in the country.

Regional Insights – Saskatchewan & Manitoba

Stressed/Anxious about Career Future



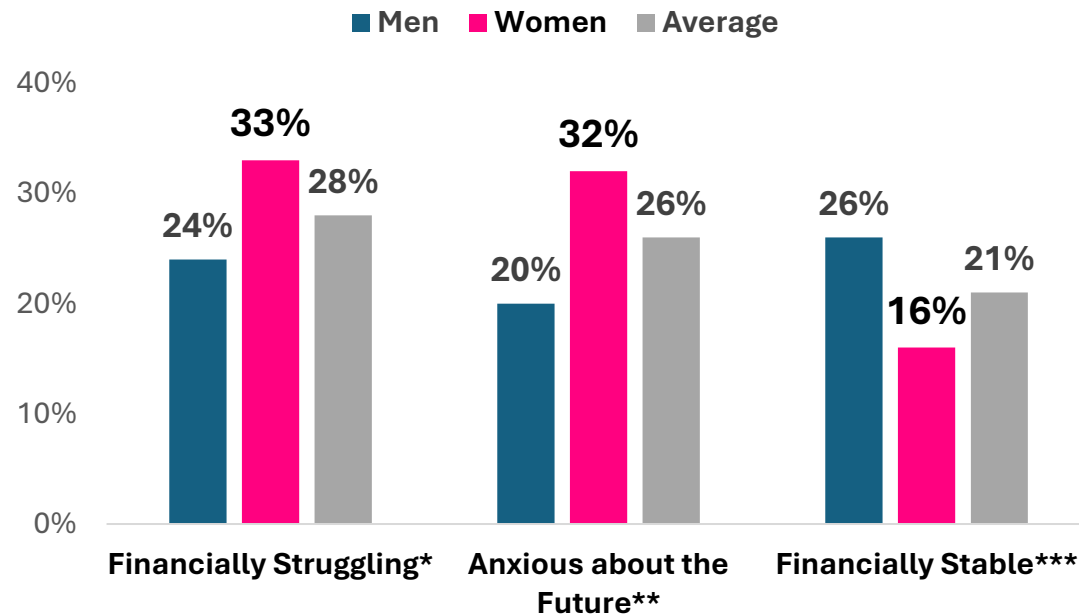
- When asked if they feel stressed or anxious about the future of their career, **SK/MB youth were the most likely to respond "Always" (31%)**, compared to 25% of all youth.

n = 2213

Participants who selected *Always* to “Do you feel stressed or anxious about the future of your employment or career..?”

Gender Insights

Financial Status and Future Concerns



Gender Disparities Exist:

- **33% of women** say they're struggling financially, compared to **24% of men**
- **32% of young women** say they feel anxious about the future, compared to **20% of young men**.
- Only **16% of women** feel financially stable vs **26% of men**

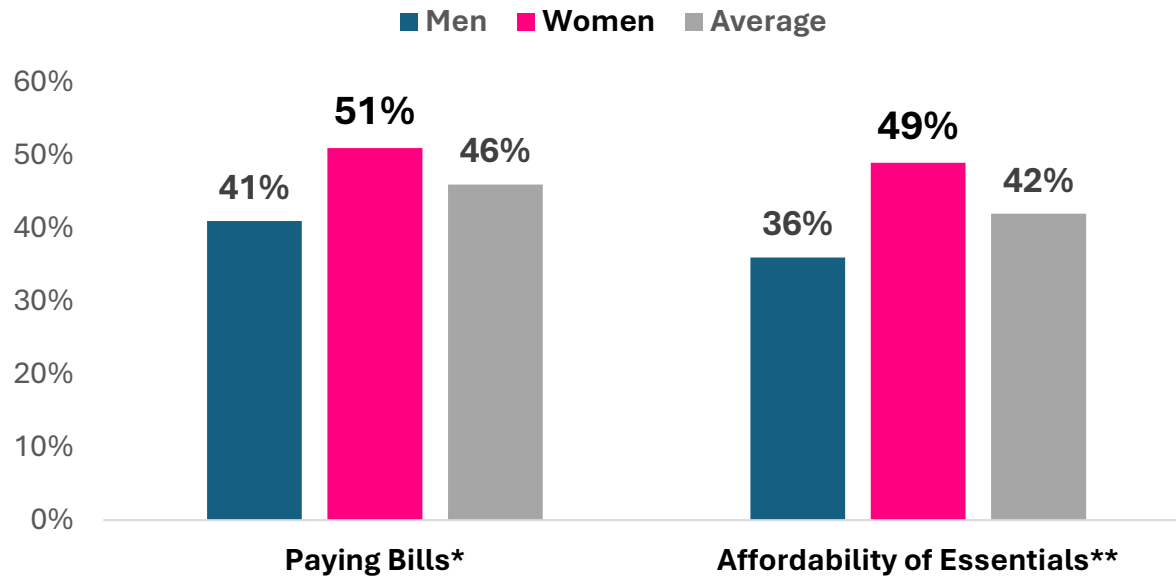
*n = 2213 – Participants who selected *I am struggling to keep up with basic expenses & I am falling behind financially / unable to meet my needs* to “Which of the following best describes your current financial situation?”

**n = 2213 – Participants who selected *Stressed or Anxious* to “When you think about your future, which words best describe how you feel? Select your top 3”

***n = 2213 – Participants who selected *I am financially secure and comfortable* to “Which of the following best describes your current financial situation?”

Gender Insights

Financial Strain on Mental Health



Women are much more likely to say financial strain is affecting their mental health, specifically when it comes to:

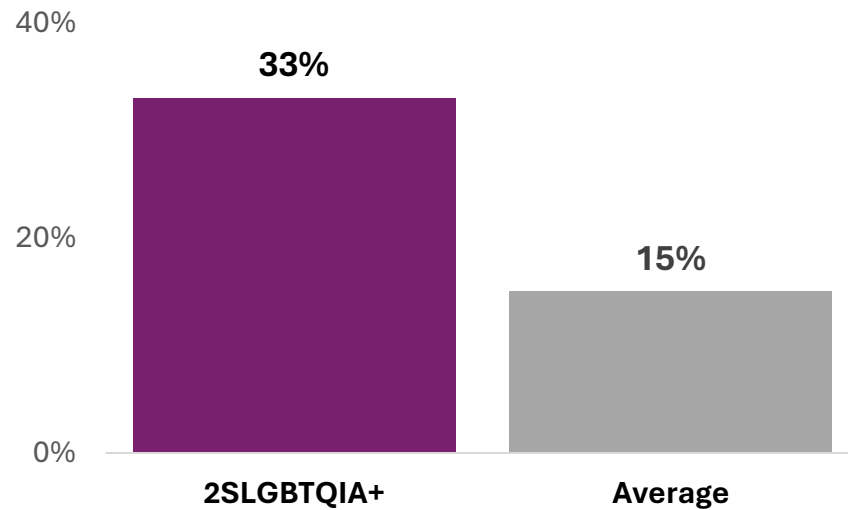
- **Paying bills:** 51% of women vs. 41% of men
- **Affordability of essentials:** 49% of women vs. 36% of men

*n = 2213 – Participants who selected *Paying your bills* to “Are any of the following having a negative impact on your mental health? Select all that apply”

**n = 2213 – Participants who selected *Affordability of Essentials* to “Are any of the following having a negative impact on your mental health? Select all that apply”

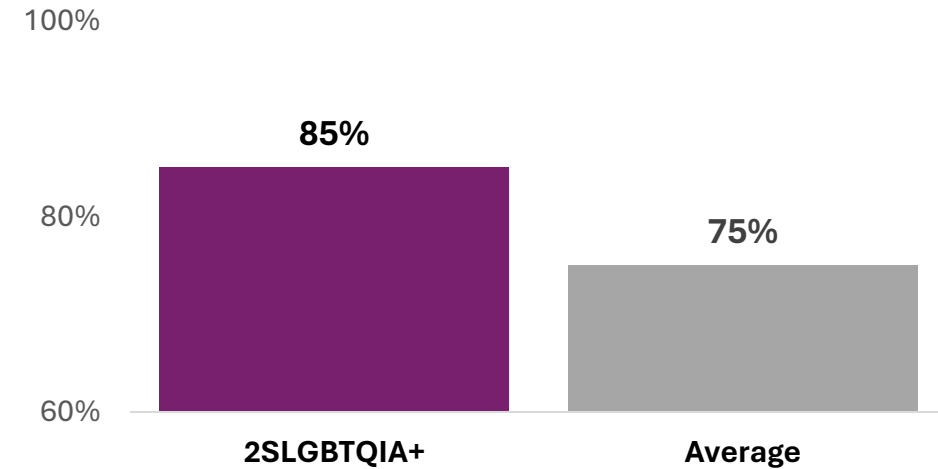
2SLGBTQI+ Insights

Poor Mental Health



n = 2213 – Participants who selected *Poor* or *Very Poor* to “Which of the following best describes your current mental health?”

Negative Mental Health Impacts – Unemployment/Employment Situation



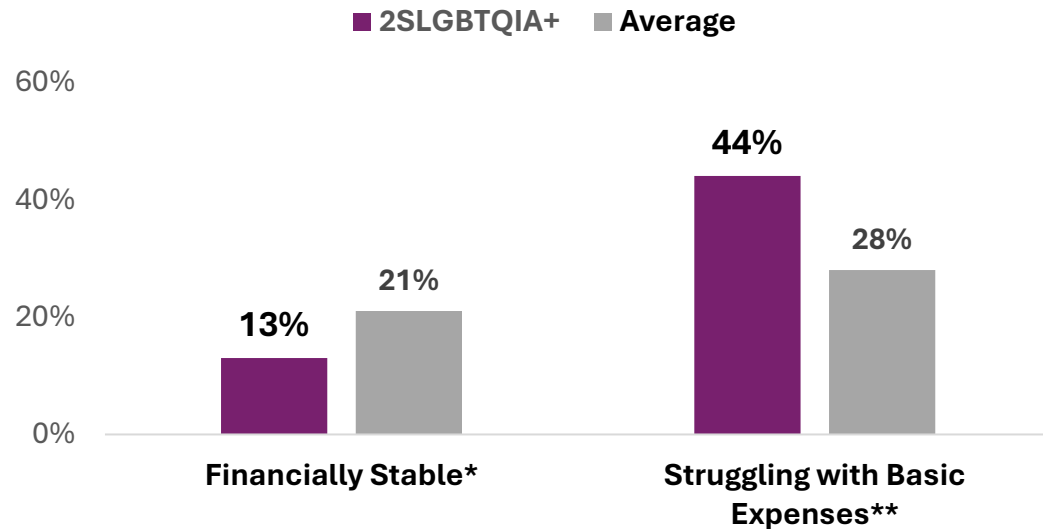
n = 2213 – Participants who selected *Definitely* or *Somewhat* to “Feeling negative impacts to your mental health because of your current employment/ unemployment situation”

2SLGBTQI+ youth report the highest rates of poor mental health of any group, with **1 in 3** rating their mental health as poor or very poor, compared to **15% of all youth**

85% say their employment or unemployment is negatively affecting their mental health (**vs. 75% of youth overall**)

2SLGBTQI+ Insights

Financial Security

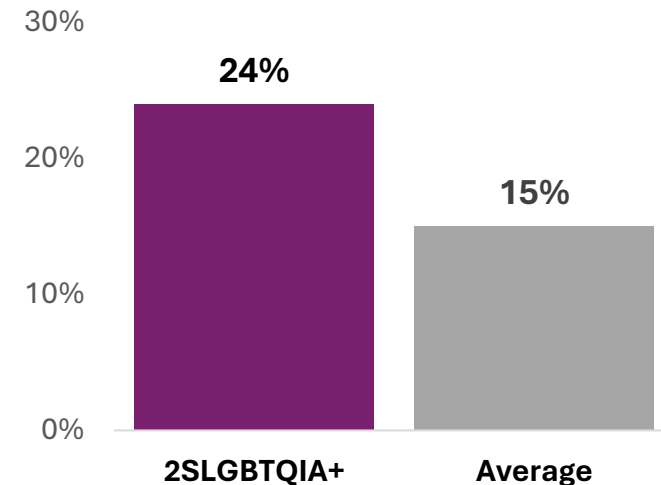


*n = 2213 – Participants who selected *I am financially secure and comfortable to* “Which of the following best describes your current financial situation?”

**n = 2213 – Participants who selected *I am struggling to keep up with basic expenses & I am falling behind financially / unable to meet my needs* to “Which of the following best describes your current financial situation?”

- **Only 13%** feel financially secure, while **44%** say they’re struggling to keep up with bills (youth average: **28%**)

70% of Income Spent on Basic Living Expenses

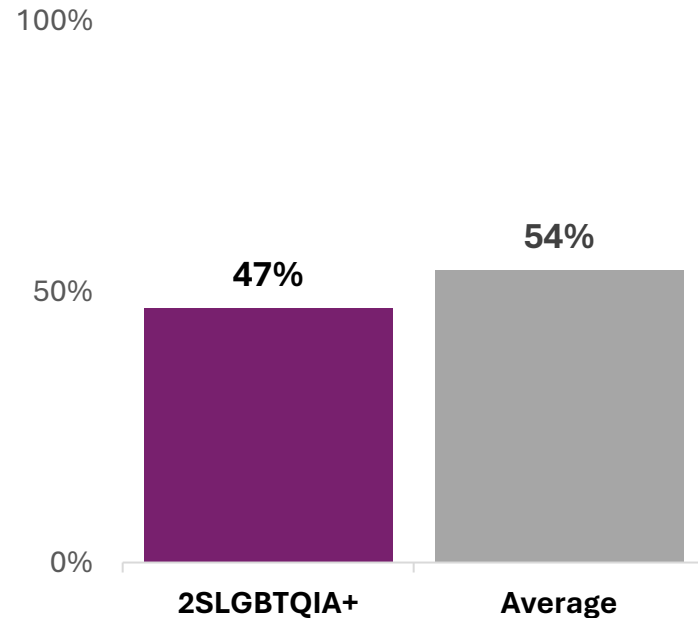


n = 1999 – Participants who selected *70% or More* to “Approximately what percentage of your monthly income do you spend on basic living expenses (such as groceries, transportation, housing, childcare)?”

- **Nearly 1 in 4** spend 70% or more of their income on basic expenses — **almost double** the rate among all youth

2SLGBTQI+ Insights

Access to Online Mental Health Resources



A Gap in Support

47% say they have access to online mental health resources, compared to **54% of all youth.**

n = 1417

Participants who selected *Strongly Agree* or *Somewhat Agree* to “I have access to online resources or apps (e.g., Calm, BetterHelp, Headspace)?”



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Abacus Data

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