



# POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

## A Snapshot

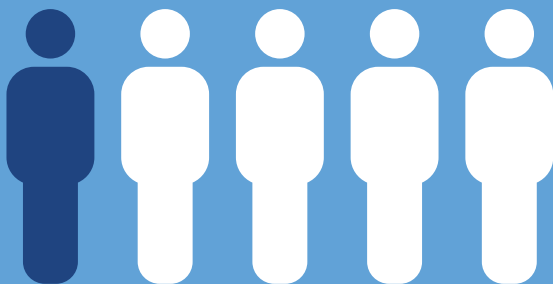
**The capacity of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face.** It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity.<sup>[1]</sup>

Information provided by the Edmonton  
Social Planning Council for Edmonton Family  
& Community Services Support Services.

Read the full literature review at:  
[edmonton.ca/fcss](http://edmonton.ca/fcss)

**FCSS**  
Family & Community  
Support Services

**Edmonton**



*1 in 5 people in Canada experience a mental health challenge each year.<sup>[2]</sup>*

*Individuals aged 15–24 experience mental health challenges at a higher rate than any other age category.<sup>[3]</sup>*



*Nearly  $\frac{1}{4}$  of youth in Canada, aged 12–17, reported fair or poor mental health in 2019.<sup>[6]</sup>*

## **EQUITY IN MENTAL HEALTH**

Experiences with mental health can be vastly different among individuals based on intersecting identities. Providing racialized individuals with space to represent themselves—and not their community as a whole—is key to supporting positive mental health development.

## **STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH**

Attaining positive mental health is possible. Empowering individuals and communities using approaches that build on strength and capacity will help improve mental health outcomes. These outcomes will promote overall well-being and enhance social inclusion through individual skill development, participation in supportive environments, and connection with peers.<sup>[4]</sup>

# YOUTH

Childhood is a vital stage for promoting mental well-being and addressing mental health challenges.<sup>[5]</sup> Unfortunately, poor mental health can be associated with adverse health and social outcomes, including lack of engagement with school or personal relationships.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Youth Suicide

Individuals aged 0–24 carried out a devastating proportion of all deaths by suicide in Alberta.<sup>[8]</sup>

2019:

14%

2020:

15%

## WHAT WORKS FOR YOUTH

Schools and community groups report more success when youth are able to collaborate on program development, establish cultural connections, and engage in safe spaces.<sup>[9]</sup>

## MARGINALIZED YOUTH

Youth who identify with marginalized groups are often at higher risk of developing mental health challenges.



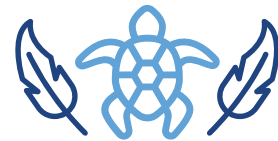
### **LGBTQ2S+**

Spaces developed specifically for LGBTQ2S+ youth, such as GSAs, positively impact school environments so LGBTQ2S+ students feel safer. They are easily adaptable to various settings, and result in better mental health and lower rates of unhealthy behaviour among youth.<sup>[9]</sup>



### **Immigrant or refugee**

They tend to access mental health support from informal systems, like social groups, communities, or religious centres—rather than formal services (e.g., the health care system).<sup>[10]</sup> Encouraging mental health promotion in these networks could create supports that improve positive mental health and long-term outcomes.



### **Indigenous communities**

Indigenous youth are at higher risk of facing mental health challenges due to colonization and intergenerational trauma, resulting in increased rates of suicide, substance use, and homelessness.<sup>[11]</sup> Programs and services led by Indigenous communities and based on healing and strengths-building create better long-term outcomes.

# ADULTS & SENIORS

Seniors (65 and older) are vulnerable to mental health challenges due to physical, mental, and environmental well-being. Alberta's growing senior population is increasingly facing depression and social isolation <sup>[13]</sup>. While addressing the mental health needs of seniors is more common, challenges faced by other adult populations are just as critical. Fortunately, the importance of positive mental health promotion in adults is gaining recognition.

## COVID & Families

In a family-focused study based in Alberta, "a high proportion of mothers reported elevated

**stress (21%), anxiety (25%), and depression (35%)."**

## THE APPROACH

Evidence suggests health promotion among older adults, using a strength-based approach to empower individuals, would improve self-perceptions of mental well-being. <sup>[14]</sup> Addressing persistent loneliness in adults aged 45–64 can reduce the risk of developing all forms of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease. <sup>[15]</sup>

## MARGINALIZED ADULT POPULATIONS

Mental health challenges faced by racialized individuals can be tied to racism, colonization, trauma or limited access to resources. <sup>[16]</sup>

Traumas experienced by Indigenous communities in Canada (among them the residential school system and the child welfare system) have disrupted cultures and traditions, leading to increased mental health challenges, including depression, anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, suicide, substance use, and family violence. <sup>[17]</sup>

## STRATEGIES

- Exploring mental health challenges as a product of colonialism and intergenerational trauma <sup>[18]</sup>
- Acknowledging that migration and settlement experiences play a critical role in the mental health outcomes of immigrants and refugees
- Improving mental health by focusing on strengthening community, culture, and identity
- Reconnecting Indigenous peoples with their cultures and traditions to help healing

## COVID-19

- Short-term mental health outcomes of the pandemic are being exposed, but long-term mental health outcomes are unknown
- Hospitals have seen a 200% increase in patients admitted for substance use or attempted suicide <sup>[6]</sup>
- 70% of children and youth report the pandemic impacted their mental health <sup>[21]</sup>
- Outcomes have not been felt uniformly across demographics—racialized populations' socio-economic and health indicators dramatically worsened <sup>[20]</sup>

Nationally,

# 59%

of people indicated their mental health was negatively affected by COVID-19;

**66% were women** <sup>[19]</sup>

### **FIRST STEPS**

*How these impacts will be experienced long-term is unknown, but ensuring mental health resources are accessible and equitable is a critical starting point.*

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