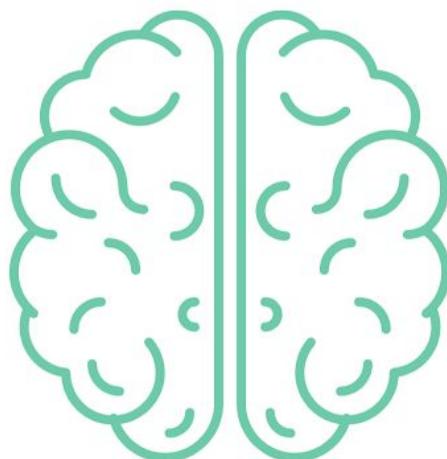




Faces of Advocacy

Mental Health Index Report

2020



September 19th 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Dr. David Edward-Ooi Poon, a Canadian citizen and founder of Advocacy for Family Reunification at the Canadian Border. We aim to allow **safe** reunification of foreign national family members of Canadians into Canada. The official House of Commons petition I started, e2657, gained the support of over 5300 voting Canadian and residents over the course of a month. **Our organization has over 7000 members as of September 19th.**

These are the results of an indexing of over 1200 of our members in terms of the state of their mental health.

In brief, I am a family physician with extra training in mental health, and I used validated mental health rating scales to assess our group. These are the PHQ2 (Depression), GAD7 (Anxiety), and PCL-C (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD, in civilians). These tools are validated specifically for patients to be able to answer, and while they are not administered by a healthcare professional and likely cannot be diagnostic, they still offer a reasonable and evidenced-based look into the mental health effects of family separation due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions. Proper statistical analysis is pending on this sample.

While research into the negative mental health effects of separation from one's partner is clear (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3109/00048674.2010.529603>) there is **no current reported research on the mental health effects of COVID-19 related travel restriction separation on Canadians.**

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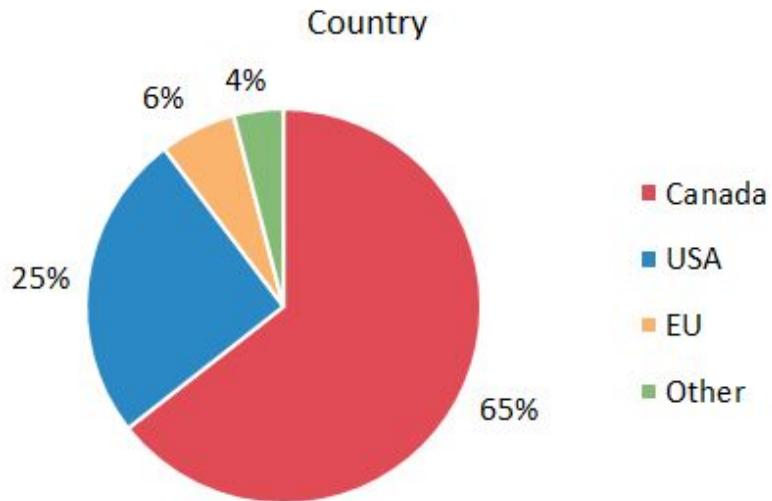
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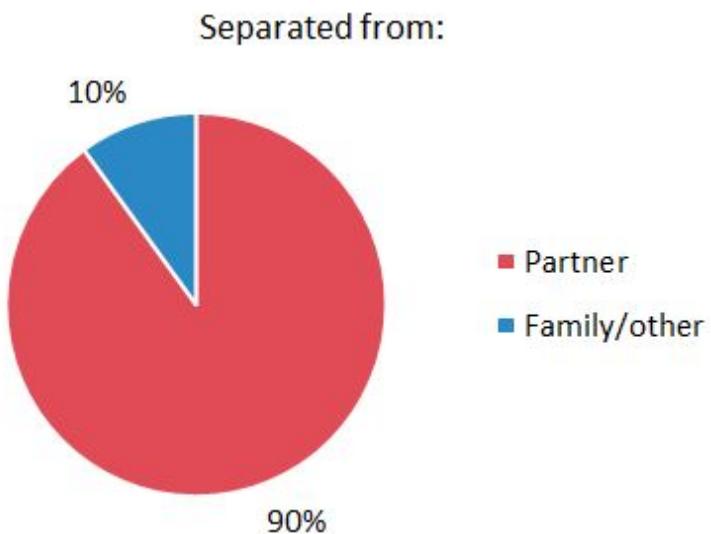
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65 percent of us are Canadian.



1) **90 percent of us are separated from a partner.** We are defining committed partner as an unmarried and non-common law partner (has not lived together continuously for at least one year with no break) of a Canadian. These are fiancés, “snowbirds,” long distance couples, and those who cannot marry due to religious, personal, financial, or LGBTQ+ reasons.



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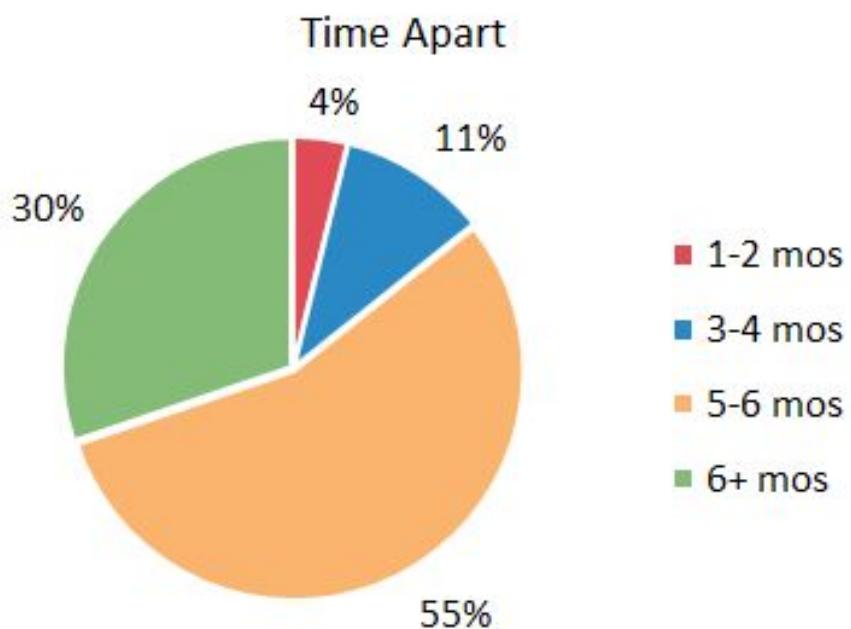
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85 percent of us have been separated from our loved one(s) for 5+ months.



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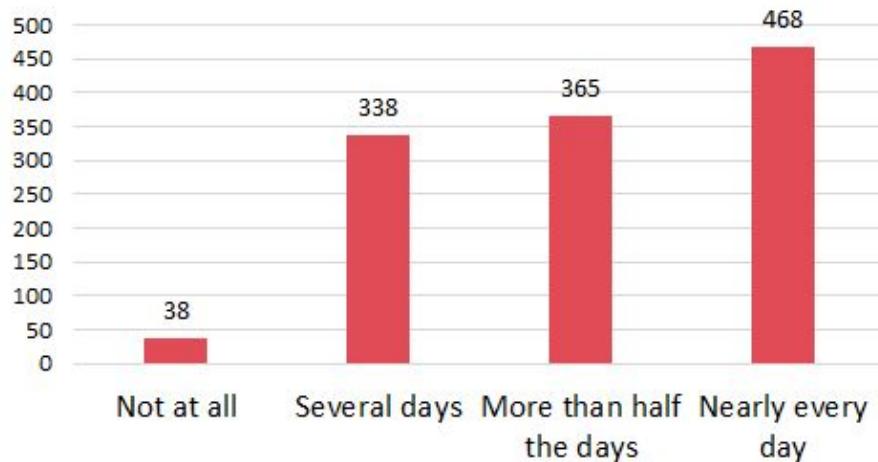
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2) 49 percent of respondents answered "I've never been diagnosed with a mental illness."

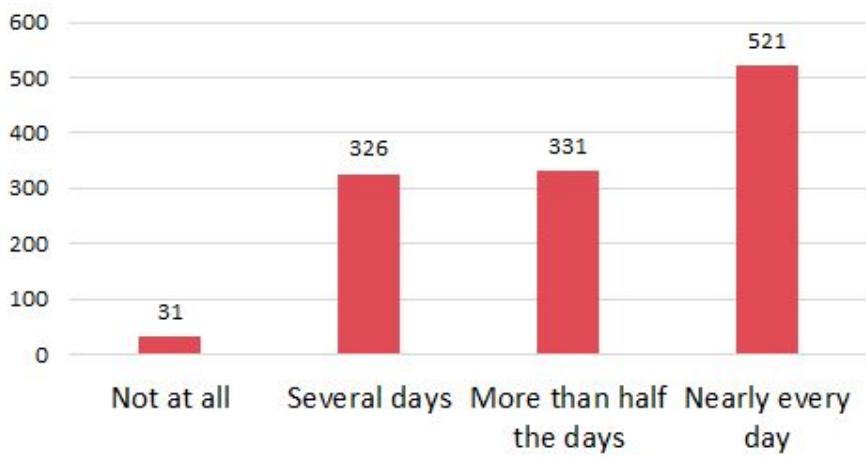
3) Despite this, **an alarming 69.1 percent would be symptomatic and screen positive for symptoms of clinical depression (as per PHQ-2 depression questionnaire).**

PHQ-2 Depression Questionnaire: Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

Little interest or pleasure in doing things



Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless



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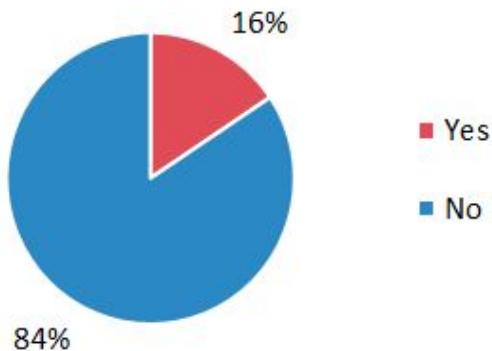
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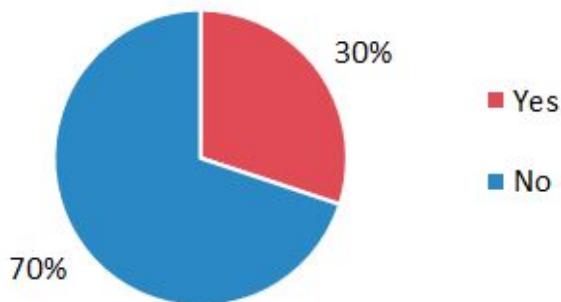
I have not yet completed the statistical analysis of the results for the GAD-7 (anxiety) and the PCL-C (post-traumatic stress disorder); however cursory analysis shows at least **53.4 percent of respondents would screen positive for moderate symptoms of anxiety. 83.5 percent of our members scored moderate to severe on at least one item corresponding to a key symptom of civilian PTSD.**

4) 16 percent of respondents had a history of self-harm and/or suicidal thoughts prior to the travel restrictions. **This number nearly doubles, leaping to 30 percent, after the implementation of the Canadian travel restrictions.**

Do you have a history of self-harm AND/OR
suicidal thoughts/attempts prior to the COVID-19
travel restrictions?

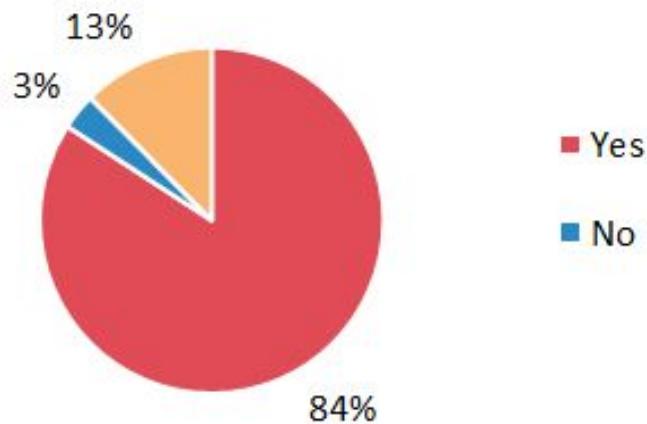


Since the implementation of travel restrictions,
have you had thoughts of self-harm AND/OR
suicide?



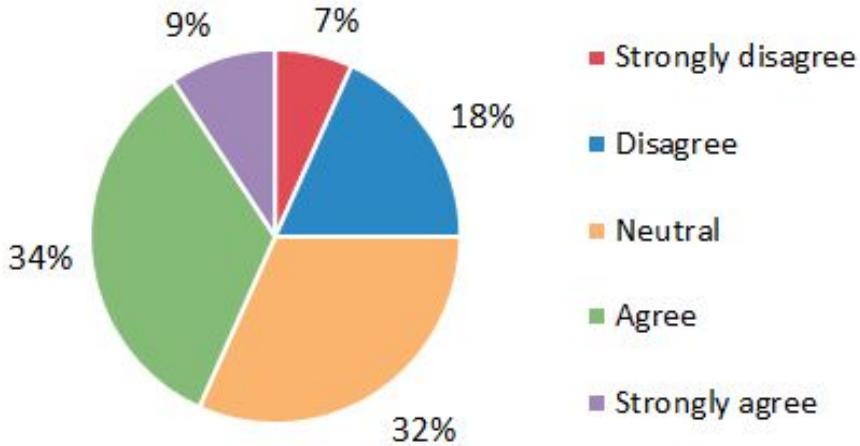
5) 84 percent have felt that their **mental health is on a downward trajectory**.

Do you feel that your mental health is decreasing the longer you're separated from your loved one(s)?



6) 32 percent of respondents are neutral, and 25 percent disagree or strongly disagree, when asked if they have **access to supportive resources or people for their mental health**. This means that **fewer than half responded in the affirmative**.

"I feel like I have supportive people/resources to turn to when my mental health is poor."



Summary: From this sampling of our group, it is evident that a proportion of Canadians are suffering adverse mental health effects from the COVID-19 travel restrictions. Our goal is to highlight this issue to policymakers and, if needed, offer our draft of the Family Reunification Quarantine Plan that I personally developed with guidance from a Toronto Epidemiologist. I can provide the document in French if you prefer.

Ultimately, the goal is to reunite families in Canada safely. Numerically, based on our House of Commons petition of Canadians and permanent residents, we are dealing with an order of a few thousand families who are separated, or the low tens of thousands.

Thank you again for your time, and I look forward to our meeting.

Dr. David Edward-Ooi Poon

Founder, Faces of Advocacy/Advocacy for Family Reunification at the Canadian Border

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