

# Mental Health

More people in this province have reported higher rates of anxiety levels than anywhere else in Canada, according to a national poll commissioned by Mental Health Research Canada. About 27 per cent of Nova Scotians described their anxiety level as high since the pandemic began, a 20 per cent jump from pre-pandemic levels. That's five points higher than the national average of 22 per cent who reported high anxiety levels during the pandemic. Also, about 16 per cent of Nova Scotians have reported high levels of depression since the pandemic, more than double the pre-pandemic number of seven per cent. That compares to 13 per cent nationwide and six per cent respectively (McPhee, 2020). Alongside these numbers are also the long-standing calls by Black and Indigenous Nova Scotians for systemic reform to address both colonial and racist policies that continue to harm.

What we must come to realize is that each person's mental health is shaped by various social, economic and physical environments operating at different stages of life. Risk factors for many common mental health issues are heavily associated with social inequalities: the greater the inequality, the higher the risk. We must recognize that the impact of the last year will have a long-lasting effect if we do not respond with policies and programs that view mental wellness as a life long journey fostered by healthy communities. If we fail to respond in a timely and robust manner then this impact will grow more and more severe in the coming years.

In Nova Scotia the goal of transforming mental health and addiction services has been grounded through a tiered framework; services are organized into stages that gradually escalate in intensity and intrusiveness, in order to prioritize efficient use of system resources. To support this transformation the choice and partnership approach (CAPA) was adopted in some parts of Nova Scotia as a model for mental health service delivery. However, in Nova Scotia this service delivery model has been tailored to fit the existing bio-medical model and to reflect neoliberal economic and social philosophy.

