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Mental Health, Substance Use, and 9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline – Three Advertising Campaign Evaluation Tool (ACET) Surveys

Executive Summary

Prepared for Health Canada

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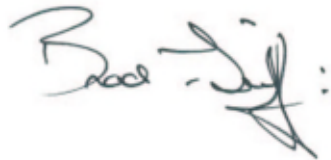
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Griffin". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Brad Griffin
President
Ipsos Public Affairs

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Prepared for Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada

Supplier name: Ipsos Public Affairs

May 2024

This public opinion research report presents the methodology of the Mental Health, Substance Use, and 9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline – Three Advertising Campaign Evaluation Tool (ACET) online surveys conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs on behalf of Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada. For Phase 1, a post-campaign survey was conducted to assess the impact of the existing Get Help Here campaign with a sample of n=2,158 Canadians ages 16+ between March 7th and March 20th, 2024. For Phase 2, a baseline survey was conducted to benchmark for a new Out of Frame campaign that includes information about resources, services, and supports on Canada.ca/mental-health, and the newly-launched 9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline. The baseline survey was conducted with a sample of n=2,198 Canadians ages 16+ between March 6th and March 20th, 2024. Following a short time in market, a post-campaign survey was conducted to assess the new campaign. It was conducted with a sample of n=2,108 Canadians ages 16+ between April 11th and April 24th, 2024.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Santé mentale, consommation de substances et le 9-8-8 : Ligne d'aide en cas de crise de suicide – Trois sondages de l'outil d'évaluation des campagnes publicitaires (OECF)

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Executive Summary

1. Background

1.1 Summary Statement

Adverse mental health outcomes, substance use-related harms, and death by suicide are significant public health issues affecting people of all ages and backgrounds across Canada.

- **Mental health and substance use:** while new data suggests that 69% of Canadians believe the country is in a mental health crisis, historical data has found that the mental health of Canadians has been in decline before the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as after.^{1,2} In early 2023, about 4 in 10 people in Canada rated their mental health as bad and at least 64% reported having friends/family with experiences related to mental health (e.g., depression, anxiety, thoughts of suicide, etc.).^{3,4,5}
- **Suicide and self-harm:** every day, an average of 12 people die by suicide in Canada.^{6,7} As of 2020, this translates to over 3,800 intentional self-harm (suicide) deaths in Canada.⁸ Earlier research also found that suicide was the ninth leading cause of death among people in Canada and the second leading cause of death among individuals aged 15 to 34, notably 2SLGBTQI+ youth.^{9,10}

Various Government of Canada initiatives and commitments are underway to invest in mental health, substance use, and suicide prevention services for Canadians. As part of this response, Health Canada (HC) and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) are working to improve the visibility of, access to, and use of free resources, services, and supports to help people in Canada manage their mental health needs and challenges.

Through public education initiatives, HC and PHAC launched a two-phased \$3.6M¹¹ national advertising campaign to promote timely and equitable mental health, substance use, and suicide intervention supports to millions of people living in Canada:

- **Phase 1** continued to reach and engage Canadians with a general interest in mental health and substance use resources, services, and supports with an existing ad creative – **Get Help Here** – which was developed through focus testing and evaluated with previous pre- and post-campaign advertising ACETs.
- **Phase 2** was a new ad campaign – **Out of Frame** - with a focus on general mental health and substance use, including information on the 9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline, funded by the Government of Canada and operated by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). This new campaign aimed to generate awareness and interest among Canadians in various stages of seeking mental health,

¹ Canadian Mental Health Association (2023). [New data reveals that 87% of people living in Canada want universal mental health care.](#)

² HC and PHAC. SPB data – internal.

³ 30% rated their mental health as average, while 12% rated their mental health as bad or very bad. The “average” rating is placed in the bottom three as part of a standardized scale in academic research. Together, average, bad and very bad make up the “total bad” rating.

⁴ HC (2022). COVID-19 tracking survey: Wave 18. Health Canada. COVID-19 Tracking Survey: Wave 20. Data collection from Jan. 12 to 30, 2022, p. 19

⁵ CAMH, Talk Suicide Canada, and Innovative Research Group (2023). Talk Suicide Canada brand awareness and 988 research – Survey results June 2023 Draft Report.

⁶ Statistics Canada (2022). [Canadian Vital Statistics—Death Database, 2017–2019, Released in January, 2022.](#)

⁷ Canadian Institute of Health Information (CIHI). [Discharge Abstract Database \(DAD\), National Ambulatory Care Reporting System \(NACRS\) and Ontario Mental Health Reporting System \(OMHRS\), Fiscal year 2020–2021.](#)

⁸ Statistics Canada (2022).

⁹ PHAC (2023). [Suicide in Canada.](#)

¹⁰ Statistics Canada (2022). [Leading causes of death were ranked based on the number of deaths reported in Canadian Vital Statistics – Death database.](#)

¹¹ Estimated amount; the actual campaign spend will be available in the annual GC report on advertising from PSPC.

substance use, and suicide prevention supports to interact with free resources, services, and supports compiled on Canada.ca/mental-health.

Both phases of the evaluation of this advertising campaign targeted, and were relevant to, the general Canadian population aged 16 and older.¹² As well, based on multi-year research, the campaigns (and post-wave evaluations) also targeted six at-risk and priority sub-populations:

1. Youth and young adults aged 16 to 34
2. Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Metis, and Inuit)
3. 2SLGBTQI+ population
4. Parents/caregivers with children aged 10-17.
5. Racialized population
6. Men aged 35 and older.

To support and assess both phases of the advertising campaign, HC and PHAC conducted three (3) ACETs.

- The first ACET re-evaluated the Phase 1 **Get Help Here** campaign after being re-launched in market. It provided an updated read on the impact of the campaign following pre- and post-campaign ACETs conducted in previous fiscal years.
- The two (2) additional ACETs, one pre- and one post-campaign, were conducted to get an initial evaluation of the Phase 2 **Out of Frame** campaign.

2. Purpose of the Research

2.1 Research Objectives

The Government's Policy on Communications and Federal Identity requires the evaluation of advertising campaigns exceeding \$1 million in media buy using the Advertising Campaign Evaluation Tool (ACET). The ACET was created in 2002 following a Cabinet directive identifying the need for a standard advertising evaluation approach across departments. The main objectives were to bring rigor and consistency to ad campaign evaluation and to develop norms on metrics against which campaigns could be evaluated.

The objectives of the research were as follows:

- Determine if people have seen the advertisements associated with the campaign
- Determine where the ads have been seen
- Measure recall of specific elements of the campaign
- Identify attitudinal and behavioural changes as a result of the advertising campaign (e.g. did they seek immediate or later support or help)
- Determine whether or not people did anything after seeing the ad (e.g. visit Canada.ca/mental-health, or any of the resources listed on that page, such as 9-8-8)

¹² Previously conducted ACETs were targeted to those 18 years and older.

The results of the ACETs will be used to continue building on a body of mental health, substance use, and suicide prevention public education research to continue iterating future campaigns, develop public education strategies, and conduct an in-depth analysis of the campaign's impact on national and at-risk population scales.

Target Audience

The target audience was common for all the 3 ACET surveys. Each survey targeted the general population of participants aged 16 and older. The following sub-populations were represented in sufficient numbers for sub-group analysis:

1. Youth and young adults aged 16 to 34
2. Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Metis, and Inuit)
3. 2SLGBTQI+ population
4. Parents/caregivers with children aged 10-17
5. Racialized populations
6. Men aged 35 and older

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

Each survey was executed online using a non-probability online panel. This is the standard approach for all Government of Canada advertising evaluation surveys. The survey platform was Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) compliant according to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG2.0AA). Survey panellists had the option to communicate their specific accessibility needs via email. The survey invitation included the Canadian Research Insights Council (CRIC) survey registration number so that respondents could verify the legitimacy of the survey as a research initiative sponsored by the Government of Canada. Survey respondents were informed of their rights under the Privacy Act, the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, and the Access to Information Act. They were also informed that their rights were protected throughout the research process.

The surveys were conducted in English and French, with respondents provided the option to complete them in either official language of their choice. All surveys were under 15 minutes in length on average. The Phase 1 and Phase 2 post-campaign surveys had 3 open-ended questions, while the Phase 2 baseline survey had 2 open-ended questions.

Phase 1: For the post-campaign survey, a pre-test was conducted on March 7th, 2024, with 39 completes (19 English / 20 French). No issues were flagged. The survey was fully launched and ran between March 7th and March 20th, 2024.

Phase 2: The baseline survey pre-test was conducted on March 6th, 2024, with 42 completes (20 English / 22 French) no issues were flagged. The survey was fully launched and ran between March 6th and March 20th, 2024. For the post-campaign survey, a pre-test was conducted on April 11th, 2024, with 41 completes (21 English / 20 French). No issues were flagged. The survey was fully launched and ran between April 11th and April 24th, 2024.